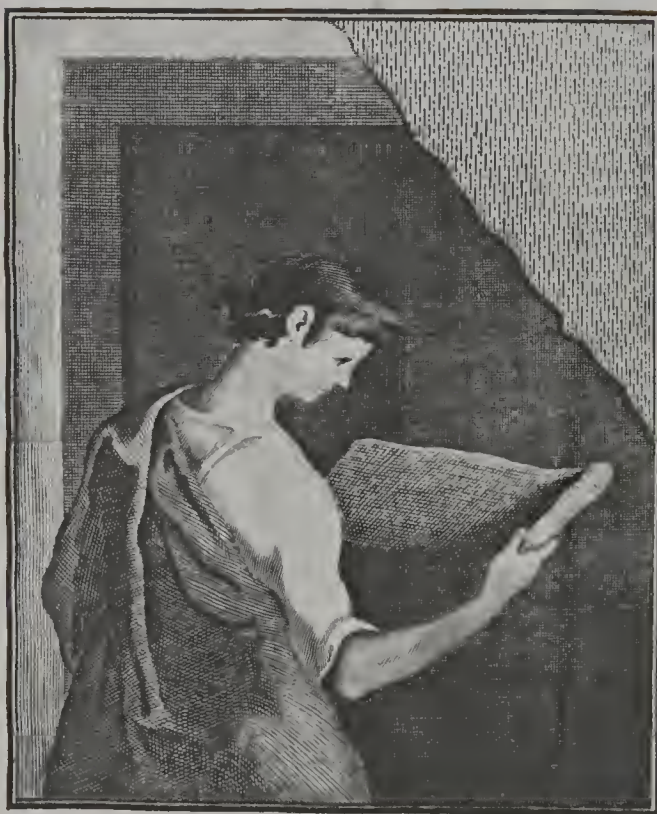


THE PAGEANT
1897





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ART EDITOR

C. HAZELWOOD SHANNON

LITERARY EDITOR

GLEESON WHITE

PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. HENRY AND COMPANY

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THE PAGEANT
EDITED BY §
C. HAZELWOOD
SHANNON AND
J. W. GLEESON
WHITE
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90 LITERARY CONTENTS

	PAGE
A POSTSCRIPT TO RETALIATION	<i>Austin Dobson</i> 1
THE PICTURES OF GUSTAVE MOREAU	<i>Gleeson White</i> 3
JULY	<i>Michael Field</i> 17
JULES BARBEY D'AUREVILLY	<i>Edmund Gosse</i> 18
MISS PEELE'S APOTHEOSIS: A STUDY IN EXTRA-SUBURBAN AMENITIES	<i>Victor Plarr</i> 32
THE SONG OF SONGS	<i>Rosamund Marriott Watson</i> 63
BLIND LOVE	<i>Laurence Housman</i> 64
ON THE SOUTH COAST OF CORNWALL	<i>John Gray</i> 82
THE GODS GAVE MY DONKEY WINGS	<i>Angus Evan Abbott</i> 87
TWENTY-FOUR QUATRAINS FROM OMAR	<i>F. York Powell</i> 106
LIGHT	<i>John Gray</i> 113
GIULIO CAMPAGNOLA	<i>D. S. MacColl</i> 136
YAI AND THE MOON	<i>Max Beerbohm</i> 143
TO AN EARLY SPRING DAY	<i>J. Sturge Moore</i> 156
THE SEVEN PRINCESSES	<i>Maurice Maeterlinck</i> 163
<i>(Translated by Alfred Sutro)</i>	
RENEWAL	<i>Michael Field</i> 185
VIRAGO	<i>W. Delaplaine Scull</i> 186
ANCILLA DOMINI	<i>Selwyn Image</i> 196
OF PURPLE JARS	<i>Edward Purcell</i> 198
THE LAGGARD KNIGHT	<i>R. Garnett</i> 221
QUEEN YSABEAU	<i>Count Villiers de l'Isle-Adam</i> 222
<i>(Translated by A. Teixeira de Mattos)</i>	
ON A BRETON CEMETERY	<i>Ernest Dowson</i> 232
THE LILIES OF FRANCE	<i>Lionel Johnson</i> 233
A NOTE ON ORIGINAL WOOD-ENGRAV- ING <i>(illustrated)</i>	<i>Charles Ricketts</i> 253

ART CONTENTS

HERCULES AND THE HYDRA	<i>Gustave Moreau</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
		PAGE
THE APPARITION	<i>Gustave Moreau</i>	9
THE SPHINX	<i>Gustave Moreau</i>	15
THE ANCIENT MARINER, from a pen drawing	<i>Reginald Savage</i>	29
LA PIA	<i>Dante Gabriel Rossetti</i>	43
HAMLET AND OPHELIA, from a pen drawing	<i>Dante Gabriel Rossetti</i>	57
A STUDY IN SANGUINE AND WHITE	<i>Charles Hazelwood Shannon</i>	71
A WOUNDED AMAZON	<i>Charles Hazelwood Shannon</i>	85
PERSEUS AND THE SEA-MAIDENS	<i>Sir Edward Burne-Jones</i>	99
THE CALL OF PERSEUS	<i>Sir Edward Burne-Jones</i>	111
THE INVISIBLE PRINCESS, from a pen drawing	<i>Laurence Housman</i>	125
THE CAPTIVE STAG, from an en- graving	<i>Giulio Campagnola</i>	135
THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA, from an engraving	<i>Giulio Campagnola</i>	139
THE FLUTE-PLAYER, from an en- graving	<i>Giulio Campagnola</i>	141
YOUNG GIRLS BY THE SEA	<i>P. Puvis de Chavannes</i>	149
YOUNG GIRLS AND DEATH	<i>P. Puvis de Chavannes</i>	161
LE PREMIER BAL, from a water- colour	<i>Charles Conder</i>	175
THE DEATH OF ABEL	<i>George Frederick Watts, R.A.</i>	189
THE GENIUS OF GREEK POETRY	<i>George Frederick Watts, R.A.</i>	203
J. K. HUYSMANS	<i>Will Rothenstein</i>	217
THE FAIRY SHIP	<i>Walter Crane</i>	229
THE BATHERS	<i>William Strang</i>	243
THE AUTUMN MUSE	<i>Charles Ricketts</i>	251
THE QUEEN OF THE FISHES, a woodcut in five blocks	<i>Lucien Pissarro</i>	259

§ HERCULES AND THE HYDRA
by
Gustave Moreau



§ A POSTSCRIPT TO 'RETALIATION'

[After the fourth edition of Dr. Goldsmith's *Retaliation* was printed, the publisher received a supplementary epitaph on the wit and punster, Caleb Whitefoord. Though it is found appended to the later issues of the poem, it has been suspected that Whitefoord wrote it himself. It may be that the following, which has recently come to light, is another forgery.]

Here JOHNSON is laid. Have a care how you walk ;
 If he stir in his sleep, in his sleep he will talk.
 Ye gods ! how he talk'd ! What a torrent of sound
 His hearers invaded, encompass'd, and—drown'd !
 What a banquet of memory, fact, illustration,
 In that innings-for-one that he call'd *conversation* !
 Can't you hear his sonorous 'Why no, sir !' and 'Stay, sir !'
 Your premiss is wrong,' or 'You don't see your way, sir !'
 How he silenc'd a prig, or a slip-shod romancer !
 How he pounc'd on a fool with a knock-me-down answer !
 But peace to his slumbers ! Tho' rough in the rind,
 The heart of the giant was gentle and kind :
 What signifies now, if in bouts with a friend,
 When his pistol miss'd fire, he would use the butt-end ?¹
 If he trampled your flow'rs—like a bull in a garden—
 What matter for that ? he was sure to ask pardon ;
 And you felt on the whole, tho' he'd toss'd you and gor'd you,
 It was something, at least, that he had not ignor'd you.
 Yes ! the outside was rugged. But test him within,
 You found he had nought of the bear but the skin ;²
 And for bottom and base to his 'anfractuosity,'
 A fund of fine feeling, good taste, generosity.
 He was true to his conscience, his King, and his duty,
 And he hated the Whigs, and he softened to beauty.

Turn now to his writings. I grant, in his tales,
 That he made little fishes talk vastly like whales ;³
 I grant that his language was rather emphatic,
 Nay, even—to put the thing plainly—dogmatic ;

But

§ Read for the author, by the Master of the Temple, at the dinner of the 'Johnson Society' in Pembroke College, Oxford, on the 22nd June of 1896.

¹ Goldsmith said this of Johnson.

² Goldsmith also said this.

³ And this.

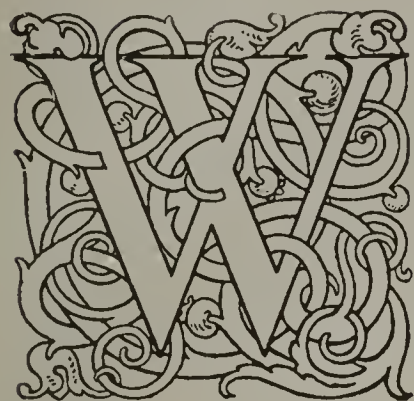
But read him for style, and dismiss from your thoughts
 The crowd of compilers who copied his faults,¹
 Say, where is there English so full and so clear,
 So weighty, so dignified, manly, sincere?
 So strong in expression, conviction, persuasion?
 So prompt to take colour from place and occasion?
 So widely removed from the doubtful, the tentative;
 So truly—and in the best sense—argumentative?

You may talk of your Burkes and your Gibbons so clever
 But I hark back to him with a 'Johnson for ever!'
 And I feel as I muse on his ponderous figure,
 Tho' he's great in this age, in the next he'll grow bigger;
 And still while his Pembroke takes sunlight upon her,
 New dons shall assemble, and dine in his honour!

AUSTIN DOBSON.

¹ These, or like rhymes, are to be found in *Edwin and Angelina* and in *Retaliation* itself.

THE PICTURES OF GUSTAVE MOREAU



WHO has not suffered under the tyranny of an insistent phrase from the street song of the moment? or from the reiteration of a foolish phrase? 'The French Burne-Jones,' for instance, is one that will intrude when Moreau is mentioned. Such an inept comparison is degrading to both painters, and its ghost must be laid. To apply a geographical adjective to an artist is always a fatuous substitute for criticism. A Belgian Shakespeare or a French Burne-Jones—how pitifully meaningless each phrase is seen to be when you face it boldly. For the essence of Burne-Jones is that he is Northern, and of Moreau that he is Latin.

A Frenchman looks to the East through Rome ; whether his gaze be fixed on theology or art, he sees it through the atmosphere of the eternal city. An Englishman regards Rome as an episode, and sometimes forgets even whether Greece inspired the Latins, or *vice versâ*. For Rome to a Briton is not the outpost of his frontier whence he emerges in quest of the dim past ; it is not the beginning of his to-day, but one of the twilights of dead yesterdays. He may travel to the Orient, whose frontier is Greece, by sea ; or, through the haunted forests of Germany and down the Danube. His East is linked to him not by the Cæsars, nor the Popes, but by the Crusaders. His myths of Hellas reach him more often by way of Chaucer or William Morris. That Venus should masquerade as Our Lady of Pain, clad in broderies of mediæval fashion, seems to him natural enough. Not so the Frenchman, who, Latin by race, is still Latin in heart, and regards far off Greece and more distant Egypt as the direct artistic progenitors of his forefathers the Romans, by whom he claims a clear pedigree through the masters of classic times, back to the East, the birthplace of knowledge.

Recognising this sharply defined distinction, you may trace the art of Burne-Jones and Moreau to the same fountain-head, and find in the brooding East the mother of all the mysteries each delights to re-edify ; but the two streams only meet at the source. Over the waters of the one still hangs the heavy-scented incense cloud of the Middle Ages ; the other flows azure and sparkling from springs fed by the dews from the mystic rose of Persia, from lotus-pools of Ind, and from Hellenic brooks wherein Narcissus gazed.

For Moreau is the classic ideal, which is scholarly simplicity ; although

though in his case it is often overlaid with the fantastic decoration of the earlier mythologies whence Greece drew its inspiration. Burne-Jones is the romantic ideal, with its Christianity and Paganism blended in the twilight of the gods—the transitional time when the Early Church buried the marble statues of Venus lest at night she should awaken and tempt their proselytes astray. Therefore, with no more thought of the foolish catch-word, we may set out to consider Gustave Moreau, not as a rival nor a disciple, but as an artist whose worth in all essential aspects is totally unlike that of his great English contemporary.

Gustave Moreau, who was born in 1826, in his student days won the *Prix de Rome*. As was the case with many others, his sojourn in Italy changed the current of his art. He forgot his tentative hesitating exercises, inspired at times by Delacroix, and became absorbed in the study of Mantegna and of Leonardo. By his choice of old masters, a young artist unwittingly discovers the secret of himself. Living men may influence him by their personality and power, but the old masters reveal his dormant impulses, and arouse that which becomes ultimately the dominant note of his artistic temperament. It is not that a student is influenced directly by the older masters, so much as that he recognises in them his true forebears, and by a sort of hereditary instinct discovers his ancestors in painters who fail always to impress those unrelated to them. It is a wise child who knows his own father: the infant is at first predisposed to all men who are sympathetic. For Moreau coquetted not merely with Delacroix but with artists of other nationalities—indeed, his *Little Horseman* might lead one to fancy that the Spanish Goya and the English Bonington, two very dissimilar painters, had attracted him for a while.

Another painter, whose influence upon the young Moreau must not be overlooked, although it need not be exaggerated, is Théodore Chassériau. The work of Chassériau, who had also worked in Ingres' studio, is almost unknown to most people; for his large mural paintings on the grand staircase of the Cour des Comptes in the Palais d'Orsay were destroyed by the Communists in 1871. But in the Churches of St. Merri, St. Roch, St. Philip and in St. Philippe du Roule, examples of his work still remain which show a very subtle blending of Delacroix and Ingres, with something exotic added to leaven the homeliness of the last named. The *Young Man and Death*, perhaps the best known of Moreau's early paintings, is ascribed 'to the memory of Chassériau,' who died in 1856. In this work, and in *Jason and Medea*, there is distinct trace of French
Classicism

Classicism ; and at the same time both show signs of the future Gustave Moreau, especially in the ritualistic treatment of their details and in their strain of lyric melancholy, new to the French art. One of his many critics—and he has been fortunate in attracting the pens of peculiarly sympathetic writers—traces to Persian art the source of that influence which ultimately overmastered, if it never entirely routed, all traces of the classic manner in his work.

Western taste is apt to regard all this bric-a-brac of dainty devices merely as unrelated ornament ; but the Persian poet thinks in metaphor and does not translate it to common-sense even in his ordinary talk. When we attempt to be poetic, at times we overload the clear thought by additions which are as obviously added commentaries as if they were printed in footnotes ; but to Moreau it would seem the fables of the *Sphinx* and *Orpheus*, the stories of *Salome*, *David*, or *Moses* present themselves far more often as parables with hidden meanings multi-coloured, yet with the sadness of the incomprehensible over all.

The career of Moreau shows that the new expression he has given to French Classicism, although winning adherents from the first, was yet a long time in gaining widespread recognition. At the Universal Exhibition of 1867 he attracted Flaubert, to whom he has been sometimes compared. Yet Flaubert, favourably enough, compares him to the English pre-Raphaelites, and this at the very moment that Delacroix in his estimate of the English school speaks so definitely and sympathetically of pre-Raphaelism.

But it were foolish to discuss Moreau as an abstraction : his pictures are the man, and these show more clearly than any attempt to explain them how newly he has reset the old fables. His *Œdipus* (here reproduced) is perhaps the only one that does not ask the question. We have but to compare it with the treatment of the same subject by Ingres, or *The Question*, by Rossetti, to realise this much. In a sympathetic and analytical review of Gustave Moreau, which M. Ary Renan contributed to the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*,¹ his chief works are grouped into four classes. The first, 'directly conceived after the antique idea,' include *Œdipe et le Sphinx*, *Hélène*, *Hercule*, *Galatée*, *Diomède*, *Jason et Médée*, and the less known water-colours, *Phèdre*, *Sapho*, *Ganymède*, *Prométhée*, and *Les Sirènes*. To the second class belong *Le jeune homme et la Mort*, *l'Orfeo*, *La Muse et le Poète*, the *Plainte du Poète*, and *L'Amour et les Muses*. To the third : *Jacob et l'Ange*

¹ 1886. xxxiii. 377, xxxiv. 35.

l'Ange, St. Etienne, un Calvaire, une Déposition de Croix, Ensevelissement du Christ, and the biblical pictures, *Salomé, David, Bethsabée*.

To these may be added the series of designs for the fables of *La Fontaine* which were admirably described in an illustrated paper in *The Magazine of Art*.¹ Reproductions of these sixty-four water-colours nominally intended to illustrate *La Fontaine* are not yet accessible in volume form, but many single pictures have been admirably etched by Bracquemond. Mr. Claude Phillips sees in them a distinctly strong trace of Persian influence, which, unlike Japanese, does not concern itself with the purely exterior manifestation of humanity and the outer world, but is distinguished by supreme calm, devoid of violent action, assisted by a severe life and tempered passions. Possibly it would be still more accurate to call this influence Hindoo-Greek, for although both sprang, doubtless, from the same source, it is the latter development which Moreau feels. But in the exquisitely delicate tracery and jewelled embroideries, that preserve a certain reticence in their splendour, there is kinship to Persian fantasy. The text of *La Fontaine*, with its beasts masquerading as men, its prim moralities and fossil anecdotes, fettered Moreau, who seems at times to have wearied of the effort.

The *Head of Orpheus*, which Ary Renan describes so charmingly, has found an English critic, whose impression is so vividly expressed that it were folly to try to put the idea in other words: 'It is against skies flushed by an aftermath of sun that recall for their touches of orange and bands of brooding purple these words, *Quelles violettes frondaisons vont descendre*—words so expressive of that hush in nature become strange in expectation of some countersign pregnant for the future—it is against a sky like this,' he says, 'that an all-persuasive figure moves away; the head of Orpheus lies between her hands, and we scarcely know if her fastidious dress, decked with so many outlandish things, has been clasped to her waist and chaste throat in real innocence of the burden she holds so mystically; but this hint of sentiment is too slight, too fugitive, in the picture to become morbid.' In *The Birth of Venus*, not included in M. Ary Renan's list, we note a curious influence of Pompeii. The figure of Venus, in the foreground, floats in a shell, by way of boat, scarce conscious of the clamorous worshippers on the distant beach who would fain attract her gaze; through a cleft in the fantastic walls of rock that bound the coast you catch a glimpse of a lovely country.

In

¹ Vol. x. 101.

90 THE APPARITION
by
Gustave Moreau



In the *Hercules and Hydra*, the central figure is, like that of the Venus, singularly removed from the gross physical type so dear to certain schools. It is a divine, not a fat Hercules ; and the reality of the monster terrifies one. The colouring of the picture—dark green with blood-red in the sky and upon the ground—imparts a grim sense of awe. The third picture illustrated, the *Apparition*, is strangely like the *Salome Dancing* in its composition. In each the chief figure stands to the left of the spectator ; in each a silent warrior with his mouth swathed in heavy drapery gazes mutely impassive ; in each, huge arches rise profound and mysterious ; but apart from mere similarity of composition the *motif* of either is utterly distinct. In the *Apparition* the figure of Herod is at the side scarce noticeable. The tragedy is but indirectly concerned with him ; it is the instigator who is confounded by the spectral and transfigured head that rivets the attention of one who sees the painting, no less than it appals the chief actor, who is alone moved by the portent. In the *Salome Dancing*, the white lily she holds as a sceptre seems to heighten the meaning of her sorcery. The hanging lamps and the cathedral-like aspect of the vast Asiatic interior, the brooding Herod who sits enthroned with grotesque monsters in a hellish trinity above him, all assist to make the scene suggest an impious travesty of the religion that was destined to enshrine the incident. So stern is the purpose that not at first do you realise the wealth of imagery which has been encrusted upon the idea, or rather the complexity of aspect which the idea itself has assumed in Moreau's conception.

To describe in catalogue the works of Gustave Moreau already mentioned would serve no purpose. If any one interested in his painting is unable to gain access to the pictures—and as they are mostly in private hands it is extremely difficult to do so—he will find in the various periodicals already mentioned descriptions of the most important. In *A Rebours*, Huysmans has spoken at some length of the *Apparition*, which was shown in England at the first Exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery. The story of *Salomé* has had a most lasting fascination for Moreau. A third picture—a wonderful water-colour, that so far appears to have escaped reproduction—which shows *Salomé* returning with the head of John the Baptist on a charger, conveys the same poetic under-current we see in the *Head of Orpheus*. It is an echo of Heine's terrible *Salomein Atta Troll*.

Of

¹ *A Rebours*, pp. 74, 79.

Of the *Young Man and Death*, with its ascription to Chassériau, of the *Plainte du Poète*, reproductions are given in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, and elsewhere; but none of these do more than suggest—and then only to those familiar with the originals—the scheme of colour which Moreau usually employs. His favourite harmony is in blues verging on peacock, merging into dark green, with rather hot browns and a liberal use of crimsons and old-gold colour. The flesh tones are inclined to be cadaverous; the draperies are often polychromatic, not ‘shot’ like those of Burne-Jones, but in layers of different hues. Bowers of clipped foliage, the lotus, the iris, and gum-cistus, lilies and roses, branches of coral and sea-plants, are frequent accessories. As Burne-Jones loves to depict metals, so Moreau delights in enamelled surfaces. To attempt to convey his manner in a sentence is not easy; perhaps to say that he is a cross between Mantegna and Delacroix might convey some idea of his colour, but his blues are quite unlike those of either master.

But this chance comparison with Burne-Jones is merely for explanatory purposes. For to appreciate one painter by linking him with another—the eternal match-making of the elderly—is at once a failure and an unintentional insult. The one distinct patent of nobility for an artist is that he shall hide a superb pedigree by the still more noble title won by his own prowess. The more you study Moreau, the more you feel he owes his manner, his style, his entire art, to Moreau and Moreau only. In a distinctly limited manner he is not merely supreme, but an autocrat with no power behind the throne. The new personality of his invention is more and more apparent as you attempt to discover the real artist. Like all princes he may employ the universal language of courts, but he speaks as unreservedly as a democrat; he does not hunt like Flaubert for the exact adjective, nor weary himself by constant self-criticism. But the language he uses, whether polished by the master of the past or created for his own purpose, is strangely pregnant.

G. W.

90 THE SPHINX
by
Gustave Moreau



JULY

THERE is a month between the swath and sheaf
 When grass is gone
 And corn still grassy,
 When limes are massy
 With hanging leaf
 And pollen-coloured blooms whereon
 Bees are voices we can hear,
 So hugely dumb
 The silent month of the attaining year.
 The white-faced roses slowly disappear
 From field and hedgerow, and no more flowers come :
 Earth lies in strain of powers
 Too terrible for flowers :
 And would we know
 Her burthen we must go
 Forth from the vale, and, ere the sunstrokes slacken,
 Stand at a moorland's edge and gaze
 Across the hush and blaze
 Of the clear-burning, verdant, summer bracken ;
 For in that silver flame
 Is writ July's own name.
 The ineffectual, numbed sweet
 Of passion at its heat.

1894

MICHAEL FIELD

JULES BARBEY D'AUREVILLY



HOSE who can endure an excursion into the backwaters of literature may contemplate, neither too seriously nor too lengthily, the career and writings of Barbey d'Aurevilly. Very obscure in his youth, he lived so long, and preserved his force so consistently, that in his old age he became, if not quite a celebrity, most certainly a notoriety. At the close of his life—he reached his eighty-first year—he was still to be seen walking the streets or haunting the churches of Paris, his long, sparse hair flying in the wind, his fierce eyes flashing about him, his hat poised on the side of his head, his famous lace frills turned back over the cuff of his coat, his attitude always erect, defiant, and formidable. Down to the winter of 1888 he preserved the dandy dress of 1840, and never appeared but as M. de Pontmartin has described him, in black satin trousers, which fitted his old legs like a glove, in a flapping, brigand wideawake, in a velvet waistcoat, which revealed diamond studs and a lace cravat, and in a wonderful shirt that covered the most artful pair of stays. In every action, in every glance, he seemed to be defying the natural decay of years, and to be forcing old age to forget him by dint of spirited and ceaseless self-assertion. He was himself the prototype of all the Brassards and Misnilgrands of his stories, the dandy of dandies, the mummied and immortal beau.

His intellectual condition was not unlike his physical one. He was a survival—of the most persistent. The last, by far the last, of the Romantiques of 1840, Barbey d'Aurevilly lived on into an age wholly given over to other aims and ambitions, without changing his own ideals by an iota. He was to the great men who began the revival, to figures like Alfred de Vigny, what Shirley was to the early Elizabethans. He continued the old tradition, without resigning a single habit or prejudice, until his mind was not a whit less old-fashioned than his garments. Victor Hugo, who hated him, is said to have dedicated an unpublished verse to his portrait:

‘Barbey d'Aurevilly, formidable imbécile.’

But ‘imbécile’ was not at all the right word. He was absurd; he was outrageous; he had, perhaps, by dint of resisting the decrepitude of his natural powers, become a little crazy. But imbecility is the very last word to use of this mutinous, dogged, implacable old pirate of letters.

Jules

Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly was born near Valognes (the 'V——' which figures in several of his stories) on the 2nd of November 1808. He liked to represent himself as a scion of the bluest nobility of Normandy, and he communicated to the makers of dictionaries the fact that the name of his direct ancestor is engraved on the tomb of William the Conqueror. But some have said that the names of his father and mother were never known, and others (poor d'Aurevilly!) have set him down as the son of a butcher in the village of Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte. He was at college with Maurice de Guérin, and quite early, about 1830 apparently, he became personally acquainted with Chateaubriand. His youth seems to be wrapped up in mystery; according to one of the best informed of his biographers, he vanished in 1831, and was not heard of again until 1851. To these twenty years of alleged disappearance one or two remarkable books of his are, however, ascribed. It appears that what is perhaps the most characteristic of all his writings, *Du Dandyisme et de Georges Brummell*, was written as early as 1842; and in 1845 a very small edition of it was printed by an admirer of the name of Trebutien, to whose affection d'Aurevilly seems to have owed his very existence. It is strange that so little is distinctly known about a man who, late in life, attracted much curiosity and attention. He was a consummate romancer, and he liked to hint that he was engaged during early life in intrigues of a corsair description. The truth seems to be that he lived, in great obscurity, in the neighbourhood of Caen, probably by the aid of journalism. As early as 1825 he began to publish; but of all the productions of his youth, the only one which can now be met with is the prose poem of *Amaïdée*, written, I suppose, about 1835; this was published by M. Paul Bourget as a curiosity immediately after Barbey d'Aurevilly's death. Judged as a story, *Amaïdée* is puerile; it describes how to a certain poet, called Somegod, who dwelt on a lonely cliff, there came a young man altogether wise and stately named Altaï, and a frail daughter of passion, who gives her name to the book. These three personages converse in magnificent language, and, the visitors presently departing, the volume closes. But an interest attaches to the fact that in Somegod (*Quelque Dieu!*) the author was painting a portrait of Maurice de Guérin, while the majestic Altaï is himself. The conception of this book is Ossianic; but the style is often singularly beautiful, with a marmoreal splendour founded on a study of Chateaubriand and, perhaps, of Goethe, and not without relation to that of Guérin himself.

The

The earliest surviving production of d'Aurevilly, if we except *Amaïdée* is *L'Amour Impossible*, a novel published in 1841, with the object of correcting the effects of the poisonous *Lélia* of George Sand. Already, in this crude book, we see something of the Barbey d'Aurevilly of the future, the Dandy-Paladin, the Catholic Sensualist or Diavolist, the author of the few poor thoughts and the sonorous, paroxysmal, abundant style. I forget whether it is here or in a slightly later novel that, in hastily turning the pages, I detect the sentiment, 'Our forefathers were wise to cut the throats of the Huguenots, and very stupid not to burn Luther.' The late Master of Balliol is said to have asked a reactionary undergraduate, 'What, Sir! would you burn, would you burn?' If he had put the question to Barbey d'Aurevilly, the scented hand would have been laid on the cambric bosom, and the answer would have been, 'Certainly I should.' In the midst of the infidel society and literature of the Second Empire, d'Aurevilly persisted in the most noisy profession of his entire loyalty to Rome, but his methods of proclaiming his attachment were so violent and outrageous that the Church showed no gratitude to her volunteer defender. This was a source of much bitterness and recrimination, but it is difficult to see how the author of *Le Prêtre Marié* and *Une Histoire sans nom* could expect pious Catholics to smile on his very peculiar treatment of ecclesiastical life.

Barbey d'Aurevilly, none the less, deserves attention as really the founder of that neo-catholicism which has now invaded so many departments of French literature. At a time when no one else perceived it, he was greatly impressed by the beauty of the Roman ceremonial, and determined to express with poetic emotion the mystical majesty of the symbol. It must be admitted that, although his work never suggests any knowledge of or sympathy with the spiritual part of religion, he has a genuine appreciation of its externals. It would be difficult to point to a more delicate and full impression of the solemnity which attends the crepuscular light of a church at vespers than is given in the opening pages of *A un Dîner d'Athées*. In *L'Ensorcelée*, too, we find the author piously following a chanting procession round a church, and ejaculating, '*Rien n'est beau comme cet instant solennel des cérémonies catholiques.*' Almost every one of his novels deals by preference with ecclesiastical subjects, or introduces some powerful figure of a priest. But it is very difficult to believe that his interest in it all is other than histrionic or phenomenal. He likes the business of a priest, he likes the furniture of a church, but there, in spite of his vehement protestations

protestations, his piety seems to a candid reader to have begun and ended.

For a humble and reverent child of the Catholic Church, it must be confessed that Barbey d'Aurevilly takes strange liberties. The mother would seem to have had little control over the caprices of her extremely unruly son. There is scarcely one of these ultra-catholic novels of his which it is conceivable that a pious family would like to see lying upon its parlour table. The Devil takes a prominent part in many of them, for d'Aurevilly's whim is to see Satanism everywhere, and to consider it matter of mirth; he is like a naughty boy, giggling when a rude man breaks his mother's crockery. He loves to play with dangerous and forbidden notions. In *Le Prêtre Marié* (which, to his lofty indignation, was forbidden to be sold in Catholic shops) the hero is a renegade and incestuous priest, who loves his own daughter, and makes a hypocritical confession of error in order that, by that act of perjury, he may save her life, as she is dying of the agony of knowing him to be an atheist. This man, the Abbé Sombreval, is bewitched, is possessed of the Devil, and so is Ryno de Marigny in *Une vieille Maîtresse*, and Lasthénie de Ferjol in *Une Histoire sans nom*. This is one of Barbey d'Aurevilly's favourite tricks, to paint an extraordinary, an abnormal condition of spirit, and to avoid the psychological difficulty by simply attributing it to sorcery. But he is all the time rather amused by the wickedness than shocked at it. In *Le Bonheur dans le Crime*—the moral of which is that people of a certain grandeur of temperament can be absolutely wicked with impunity—he frankly confesses his partiality for *la plaisanterie légèrement sacrilège*, and all the philosophy of d'Aurevilly is revealed in that rash phrase. It is not a matter of a wounded conscience expressing itself with a brutal fervour, but the gusto of conscious wickedness. His mind is intimately akin with that of the Neapolitan lady, whose story he was perhaps the first to tell, who wished that it only were a sin to drink iced sherbet. Barbey d'Aurevilly is a devil who may or may not believe, but who always makes a point of trembling.

The most interesting feature of Barbey d'Aurevilly's temperament, as revealed in his imaginative work, is, however, his preoccupation with his own physical life. In his youth, Byron and Alfieri were the objects of his deepest idolatry; he envied their disdainful splendour of passion; and he fashioned his dream in poverty and obscurity so as to make himself believe that he was of their race. He was a Disraeli—with whom, indeed, he has certain relations of style—but with none of

Disraeli's social advantages, and with a more inconsequent and violent habit of imagination. Unable, from want of wealth and position, to carry his dreams into effect, they became exasperated and intensified, and at an age when the real dandy is settling down into a man of the world, Barbey d'Aurevilly was spreading the wings of his fancy into the infinite azure of imaginary experience. He had convinced himself that he was a Lovelace, a Lauzun, a Brummell, and the philosophy of dandyism filled his thoughts far more than if he had really been able to spend a stormy youth among marchionesses who carried, set in diamonds in a bracelet, the ends of the moustaches of viscounts. In the novels of his maturity and his old age, therefore, Barbey d'Aurevilly loved to introduce magnificent aged dandies, whose fatuity he dwelt upon with ecstasy, and in whom there is no question that he saw reflections of his imaginary self. No better type of this can be found than that Vicomte de Brassard, an elaborate, almost enamoured, portrait of whom fills the earlier pages of what is else a rather dull story, *Le Rideau Cramoisi*. The very clever, very immoral tale called *Le Plus Bel Amour de Don Juan*—which relates how a superannuated but still incredibly vigorous old beau gives a supper to the beautiful women of quality whom he has known, and recounts to them the most piquant adventure of his life—is redolent of this intense delight in the prolongation of enjoyment by sheer refusal to admit the ravages of age. Although my space forbids quotation, I cannot resist repeating a passage which illustrates this horrible fear of the loss of youth and the struggle against it, more especially as it is a good example of d'Aurevilly's surcharged and intrepid style:

'Il n'y avait pas là de ces jeunesses vert tendre, de ces petites damoiselles qu'exécrait Byron, qui sentent la tartelette et qui, par la tournure, ne sont encore que des épluchettes, mais tous étés splendides et savoureux, plantureux automnes, épanouissements et plénitudes, seins éblouissants battant leur plein majestueux au bord découvert des corsages, et, sous les camées de l'épaule nue, des bras de tout galbe, mais surtout des bras puissants, de ces biceps de Sabines qui ont lutté avec les Romains, et qui seraient capables de s'entrelacer, pour l'arrêter, dans les rayons de la roue du char de la vie.'

This obsession of vanishing youth, this intense determination to preserve the semblance and colour of vitality, in spite of the passage of years, is, however, seen to greatest advantage in a very curious book of Barbey d'Aurevilly's, in some aspects, indeed, the most curious which he has left behind him, *Du Dandyisme et de Georges Brummell*. This is really a work of his early maturity, for it was printed in a small private edition so long ago as 1845. It was not published, however,
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until 1861, when it may be said to have introduced its author to the world of France. Later on he wrote a curious study of the fascination exercised over La Grande Mademoiselle by Lauzun, *Un Dandy d'avant les Dandys*, and these two are now published in one volume, which forms that section of the immense work of d'Aurevilly which best rewards the curious reader.

Many writers in England, from Thomas Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* to our ingenious young forger of paradoxes, Mr. Max Beerbohm, have dealt upon that semi-feminine passion in fatuity, that sublime attention to costume and deportment, which marks the dandy. The type has been, as d'Aurevilly does not fail to observe, mainly an English one. We point to Lord Yarmouth, to Beau Nash, to Byron, to Sheridan, and, above all, 'à ce Dandy royal, S. M. Georges IV;' but the star of each of these must pale before that of Brummell. These others, as was said in a different matter, had 'other preoccupations,' but Brummell was entirely absorbed, as by a solemn mission, by the conduct of his person and his clothes. So far, in the portraiture of such a figure, there is nothing very singular in what the French novelist has skilfully and nimbly done, but it is his own attitude which is so original. All other writers on the dandies have had their tongues in their cheeks. If they have commended, it is because to be preposterous is to be amusing. When we read that 'dandyism is the least selfish of all the arts,' we smile, for we know that the author's design is to be entertaining. But Barbey d'Aurevilly is doggedly in earnest. He loves the great dandies of the past as other men contemplate with ardour dead poets and dead musicians. He is seriously enamoured of their mode of life. He sees nothing ridiculous, nothing even limited, in their self-concentration. It reminds him of the tiger and of the condor; it recalls to his imagination the vast, solitary forces of Nature; and when he contemplates Beau Brummell, his eyes fill with tears of nostalgia. So would he have desired to live; thus, and not otherwise, would he fain have strutted and trampled through that eighteenth century to which he is for ever gazing back with a fond regret. 'To dress one's self,' he says, 'should be the main business of life,' and with great ingenuity he dwells upon the latent but positive influence which dress has had on men of a nature apparently furthest removed from its trivialities; upon Pascal, for instance, upon Buffon, upon Wagner.

It was natural that a writer who delighted in this patrician ideal of conquering man should have a limited conception of life. Women to
Barbey

Barbey d'Aurevilly were of two varieties—either nuns or amorous tigresses ; they were sometimes both in one. He had no idea of soft gradations in society : there were the tempestuous marchioness and her intriguing maid on one side ; on the other, emptiness, the sordid hovels of the *bourgeoisie*. This absence of observation or recognition of life d'Aurevilly shared with the other Romantiques, but in his sinister and contemptuous aristocracy he passed beyond them all. Had he lived to become acquainted with the writings of Nietzsche, he would have hailed a brother-spirit, one who loathed democracy and the humanitarian temper as much as he did himself. But there is no philosophy in Barbey d'Aurevilly, nothing but a prejudice fostered and a sentiment indulged.

In referring to *Nicholas Nickleby*, a novel which he vainly endeavoured to get through, d'Aurevilly remarks : 'I wish to write an essay on Dickens, and at present I have only read one hundred pages of his writings. But I consider that if *one hundred pages* do not give the talent of a man, they give his spirit, and the spirit of Dickens is odious to me.' 'The vulgar Dickens,' he calmly remarks in *Journalistes et Polémistes*, and we laugh at the idea of sweeping away such a record of genius on the strength of a chapter or two misread in *Nicholas Nickleby*. But Barbey d'Aurevilly was not Dickens, and it really is not necessary to study closely the vast body of his writings. The same characteristics recur in them all, and the impression may easily be weakened by vain repetition. In particular, a great part of the later life of d'Aurevilly was occupied in writing critical notices and studies for newspapers and reviews. He made this, I suppose, his principal source of income ; and from the moment when, in 1851, he became literary critic to *Le Pays* to that of his death, nearly forty years later, he was incessantly dogmatising about literature and art. He never became a critical force, he was too violent and, indeed, too empty for that ; but a pen so brilliant as his is always welcome with editors whose design is not to be true, but to be noticeable, and to escape 'the obvious.' The most cruel of Barbey d'Aurevilly's enemies could not charge his criticism with being obvious. It is intensely contentious and contradictory. It treats all writers and artists on the accepted nursery principle of 'Go and see what baby's doing, and tell him not to.' This is entertaining for a moment ; and if the shower of abuse is spread broadly enough, some of it must come down on shoulders that deserve it. But the 'slashing' review of yester-year is dismal reading, and it cannot be said that the library of reprinted criticism

criticism to which d'Aurevilly gave the general title of *Les Œuvres et les Hommes* is very enticing.

He had a great contempt for Goethe and for Sainte-Beuve, in whom he saw false priests constantly leading the public away from the true principle of literary expression, '*le couronnement, la gloire et la force de toute critique, que je cherche en vain.*' A very ingenious writer, M. Ernest Tissot, has paid Barbey d'Aurevilly the compliment of taking him seriously in this matter, and has written an elaborate study on what his *criterium* was. But this is, perhaps, to inquire too kindly. I doubt whether he sought with any very sincere expectation of finding; like the Persian sage, 'he swore, but was he sober when he swore?' Was he not rather intoxicated with his self-encouraged romantic exasperation, and determined to be fierce, independent, and uncompromising at all hazards? Such are, at all events, the doubts awakened by his indignant diatribes, which once amused Paris so much, and now influence no living creature. Some of his dicta, in their showy way, are forcible. '*La critique a pour blason la croix, la balance et la gloire;*' that is a capital phrase on the lips of a reviewer, who makes himself the appointed Catholic censor of worldly letters, and is willing to assume at once the cross, the scales, and the sword. More of the hoof peeps out in this: '*La critique, c'est une intrépidité de l'esprit et du caractère.*' To a nature like that of d'Aurevilly, the distinction between intrepidity and arrogance is never clearly defined.

It is, after all, in his novels that Barbey d'Aurevilly displays his talent in its most interesting form. His powers developed late; and perhaps the best constructed of all his tales is *Une Histoire sans nom*, which dates from 1882, when he was quite an old man. In this, as in all the rest, a surprising narrative is well, although extremely leisurely, told, but without a trace of psychology. It was impossible for d'Aurevilly to close his stories effectively; in almost every case, the futility and extravagance of the last few pages destroys the effect of the rest. Like the Fat Boy, he wanted to make your flesh creep, to leave you cataleptic with horror at the end, but he had none of Poe's skill in producing an effect of terror. In *Le Rideau Cramoisi* (which is considered, I cannot tell why, one of his successes) the heroine dies at an embarrassing moment, without any disease or cause of death being suggested—she simply dies. But he is generally much more violent than this; at the close of *A un Dîner d'Athées*, which up to a certain point is an extremely fine piece of writing, the angry parents pelt one another with the mummied heart of their only child; in *Le Dessous des Cartes*,
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the key of all the intrigue is discovered at last in the skeleton of an infant buried in a box of mignonette. If it is not by a monstrous fact, it is by an audacious feat of anti-morality, that Barbey d'Aurevilly seeks to harrow and terrify our imaginations. In *Le Bonheur dans le Crime*, Hauteclair Stassin, the woman-fencer, and the Count of Savigny, pursue their wild intrigue and murder the Countess slowly, and then marry each other, and live, with youth far prolonged (d'Aurevilly's special idea of divine blessing), without a pang of remorse, without a crumpled rose-leaf in their felicity, like two magnificent plants spreading in the violent moisture of a tropical forest.

On the whole, it is as a writer, pure and simple, that Barbey d'Aurevilly claims most attention. His style, which Paul de Saint-Victor (quite in his own spirit) described as a mixture of tiger's blood and honey, is full of extravagant beauty. He has a strange intensity, a sensual and fantastic force, in his torrent of intertwined sentences and preposterous exclamations. The volume called *Les Diaboliques*, which contains a group of his most characteristic stories, published in 1874, may be recommended to those who wish, in a single example, compendiously to test the quality of Barbey d'Aurevilly. He has a curious love of punning, not for purposes of humour, but to intensify his style: '*Quel oubli et quelle oubliette*' (*Le Dessous des Cartes*), '*bou-doir fleur de pêcher ou de péché*' (*Le Plus Bel Amour*), '*renoncer à l'amour malpropre, mais jamais à l'amour propre*' (*A un Dîner d'Athées*). He has audacious phrases which linger in the memory: '*Le Profil, c'est l'écueil de la beauté*' (*Le Bonheur dans le Crime*); '*Les verres à champagne de France, un lotus qui faisait [les Anglais] oublier les sombres et religieuses habitudes de la patrie;*' '*Elle avait l'air de monter vers Dieu, les mains toutes pleines de bonnes œuvres*' (*Memoranda*).

That Barbey d'Aurevilly will take any prominent place in the history of literature is improbable. He was a curiosity, a droll, obstinate survival. We like to think of him in his incredible dress, strolling through the streets of Paris, with his clouded cane like a sceptre in one hand, and in the other that small mirror by which every few minutes he adjusted the poise of his cravat, or the studious tempest of his hair. He was a wonderful old fop or beau of the forties handed down to the eighties in perfect preservation. As a writer he was fervid, sumptuous, magnificently puerile; I have been told that he was a superb talker, that his conversation was like his books, a flood of paradoxical, flamboyant rhetoric. He made a gallant stand against old age, he defied it

§ THE ANCIENT MARINER
by
Reginald Savage



it long with success, and when it conquered him at last, he retired to his hole like a rat, and died with stoic fortitude, alone, without a friend to close his eyelids. It was in a wretched lodging high up in a house in the Rue Rousselet, all his finery cast aside, and three melancholy cats the sole mourners by his body, that they found, on an April morning of 1889, the ruins of what had once been Barbey d'Aurevilly.

EDMUND GOSSE.

MISS PEELE'S APOTHEOSIS: A STUDY IN EXTRA-SUBURBAN AMENITIES



SOME of the little residential towns which lie just outside the great zone of the London suburbs are, if possible, more staunchly respectable than the suburbs themselves. In the latter, as everybody knows, society is at times apt to be a little mixed, and it is not always safe for well-bred people with subscriptions at Mudie's to call on the occupants of the villa next their own unless they have been first of all specially introduced to them by other thoroughly 'nice' persons. But in these little country towns which dot the home counties, gentility and refinement are not thus imperilled. In Thegnhurst, for instance, the lordly lady of Colonel Cholmondeley-Smith knows herself perfectly safe in the drawing-room of the new tenant next door. For that new tenant is the pretty, plaintive little widow of a something high up in the Civil Service, and as such she is a supporter of *noblesse* and *clergé*, and is received with open arms by the circle of the Anglo-Indian matron. The Hon. and Rev. Parker Cope, a light of local society, a cricketer and a curate, need never fear a fallen 'H' or a *gauche* allusion in the house of the new-comer opposite him. For Mr. Philpott Burleigh is an old gentleman of unimpeachable antecedents among those mysterious collocations of exalted persons known as the 'county families.' Even Mrs. Ponsonby Baker, the lady of a Thegnhurst professional man, who having herself risen in some forgotten past from the bar-parlour of the 'Horse and Groom,' is consequently a stricter guardian of local social proprieties than a woman of bluer blood would be—even Mrs. Ponsonby Baker need never be outraged by the arrival in the town of a matron whose antecedents are too similar to her own. No newly-wedded ex-lady of the ballet has ever ventured, as a resident, among the terraces of Thegnhurst. No gentleman with wealth derived from a Regent Street emporium has ever brought a questionable bride into the seclusion of those pleasant country haunts.

Gentility may indeed be said to run riot in dear little towns such as these, as though in revenge for the continued existence upon earth of vulgarity and eccentricity, of Brummagem sectarianism, of faddist politics, of science, scepticism, the Bohemianism of the arts, and 'Appy 'Ampstead on a Sunday. There is something very charming to the superficial eye in the air of *ci-devant* dignity which pervades their residential

residential quarters. The very children, who all know one another, who are all so healthy, sturdy, pretty, and well dressed, and who play lawn tennis with big rackets in front of the gabled red-brick villas,—the very children suggest an *ancien régime* full of cavalier memories and Grandisonian traditions. The little sailor boys have the prettiest manners towards the local ladies, albeit they occasionally thump their nurses or one another. The little fair-haired girls are models of wholesomeness and of grace of the healthier and less ideal kind. Mr. Du Maurier might do worse than draw his child-types from Thegnhurst. Nor need his satire on their elders be anything but of the most delicate kind; for such coarse *motifs* as those inspired by the shoddy Sir Gorgius Midas, or the ambitious Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns, are unknown in the town. Society there is poor—too poor to fall into the courses which so often bring down upon Mayfair the charge of crude snobbishness or positive vulgarity. The snobbishness of Thegnhurst is of a shade so subtle that it is difficult to apprehend it with the naked eye of criticism. It is there certainly—it exists, but so mingled with better things, with honest pride in honourable birth and honourable tradition, that the man who in conversation tries to satirise it is often fain to give up the attempt with a blush and the sense of having said something stupidly ill-bred.

But if Thegnhurst is unimpeachably genteel—using the term in all good faith, just as Miss Austen might have used it—it is also unconquerably unidea-ed. As we have indicated above, it revenges itself upon vulgarity and eccentricity alike, and is inclined to class in the latter category all the interests and achievements of Mind. Wagner, Darwin, Browning, Renan—to jot down at haphazard sufficiently diverse types—are as much anathema to it as the Rev. Jehoram Stiggins of revivalist fame, or the secularist orator who was once caned by Colonel Cholmondeley-Smith for trying to institute Sunday morning cricket on Thegnhurst Common. It loathes genius, and it loathes *isms*, as frankly and unquestionably as it loathes Demos.

Thus when, a few years ago, Mr. Hugo Peele and his daughter Octavia came to live in a little cottage in the Mudleigh Road, an unfashionable part of Thegnhurst, the young lady at any rate was from the first destined to suffer social martyrdom. Mr. Hugo Peele and daughter were not, it is true, guilty of any overt acts of intellectual Bohemianism. They apparently neither wrote nor published books! Nay, he was very old, feeble, and quiet: she was an inoffensive spinster. Nevertheless, it became apparent at once to the ladies and gentlemen
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of Thegnhurst that they were not 'sound.' In the first place, nobody 'knew about them.' They came to Thegnhurst like thieves in the night, without those introductions or social relationships which usually draw people to a particular place of residence. They had no relations in the town, no friends, no acquaintances. They seemed even more impecunious than the generality of Thegnhurstians. They dressed shabbily. They kept only one servant. Many cases of books came with them, and seemed to form the chief part of their belongings. Mr. Peele never went to church, and when Miss Peele appeared there it was observed that she sat down during the Creeds, and was moreover a very plain girl. Had she been pretty, the male Thegnhurstians would have forgiven her this little piece of heterodoxy, and even the more severe among the ladies would have been too intent on finding fault with her good looks to notice her theological aberrations. But, in that she was a very plain girl, her sitting down during the Creed was voted an enormity. Matrons began to ask one another whether they really ought to call on Miss Peele. Orthodoxy decided against her, but Curiosity decided against Orthodoxy, and the vicar's wife determined to call after a due and proper lapse of weeks.

Three months after the young lady's first appearance in church the visit took place. The vicar's wife brought with her some little black collecting books, intending, in case she should find her hostess an undesirable acquaintance, at any rate to secure subscriptions for her blanket society and her coal club before giving her the cold shoulder in future. But Miss Peele did not appear wholly undesirable. She was shy, ladylike, well educated, and explained her father's absence from the scene, and from church on Sundays, in the most natural way. The vicar's wife departed from the Peeles' drawing-room with two or three half-crowns and a fairly good opinion of at least one of the new arrivals within the limits of her jurisdiction. When asked at the next working-party in aid of the Zenana Mission whether she did not find Miss Peele very odd, she replied almost charitably in her behalf: 'She isn't such an odd girl as she looks. Indeed, I rather like her! She seems a ladylike girl, although she *does* sit down during the Creeds!'

Other ladies, notably Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith and the sweet little widow, her neighbour, thereupon determined to call on this winner of the vicaress's good opinion. The month's end saw the stately Anglo-Indian local dignitary slowly mounting the three steps before the Peeles' front door. And a fortnight later the widow paid *her* visit.

Other

Other ladies, armed mostly with little black collecting books, from time to time followed suit, and at the end of a year Octavia Peele had attained to a nodding acquaintance with nearly all the society of the place. Only Mrs. Ponsonby Baker held aloof, but then such a very eclectic society lady could not be expected to come to terms under five or six years at the very least. Such a period, by the by, is a mere nothing in the placid eternities of rural existence at Thegnhurst, where social standing is as often measured by length of residence as not.

But though everybody had called upon Miss Peele, it cannot be said that they had been all prepossessed precisely in the same way as the vicarress. A gay young grass-widow and a frisky old maid or two had been bored by her to the verge of openly expressed contempt. She had no cricket, no lawn tennis, no dancing conversation. She appeared never to have seen a horse or a golf club. She took no interest in dashing young military men or brisk young curates. Having no brothers, she never referred fascinatingly to 'dear Jack out in Lahore,' or 'that silly Tom at the Cape.' She had no ideas on dress. Above all, she was gravely plain, not unpleasantly or grotesquely so, but simply gravely plain, quietly lacking in good looks. In the estimation of some women, as we all know, the absence of these is as unpardonable as their presence in a too marked degree. The gay grass-widows and sprightly old maids of Thegnhurst were perhaps not quite so hard to please; still, what had they to do with plain girls like Miss Peele?

Charming young married women, stately matrons, authoritative mothers in Israel with six or seven strapping sons at the army crammers', in the backwoods, and elsewhere—matrons of all kinds could make nothing of Octavia. If they talked to her of primrose politics, they found her delicately inattentive. A tirade against servants only served to elicit the fact that she considered Abigail in the light of a sister woman. A general discussion on Church work found her lamentably ignorant of distinctions of sect and party. Eulogy of the vicar seemed to pall on her.

Young unmarried ladies between the ages of seventeen and thirty found themselves even more out of touch with her than the foregoing. By her plainness, her distance from the possibility of being admired by the other sex, they were unconsciously estranged. Her lack of interest in Anglicanism and athletics set her on an icy, unfashionable pinnacle, which they certainly did not envy as one usually envies pinnacles. Above all, her unmistakable culture was a stumbling-block to them.

Lilly

Lilly Cranley, daughter of old General Cranley, late of the Bombay Army, a thoroughly sensible girl in the estimation of the matrons, was one day calling on Octavia—it was her first call and her last—and happened in the course of a few remarks on her favourite novels to make the then fashionable inquiry, ‘Have you read *Pace*? My brothers think it’s not quite the thing for girls to read, so, of course, I’ve got it at the Railway Library.’

‘No, I am sorry to say I haven’t read it,’ said Miss Peele, with her pleasant smile, which somehow or other always seemed insincere. ‘I’ve been making out Theocritus with the help of a lexicon this morning.’

‘Who was Theocritus?’ said bright Lilly Cranley (educated by governesses and at Brighton).

‘Oh,’ said Octavia, her eyes—she had fine eyes—brightening extremely. ‘Do you really care to talk about him? He was a poet, a Sicilian Greek ——’ And she went off at score, talking with eloquent animation for quite ten ecstatic minutes.

‘Greek!’ ejaculated Miss Cranley, whose unmoved face had finally chilled Octavia into silence. ‘Greek! *How deep!*’ And with that, timidly, as though in dread of further appeals to that tiresome, unfashionable part of her, the brain, she bade our heroine farewell, and with hastily gathered up gloves and parasol beat a precipitate retreat.

Alas, poor Octavia! In homely phrase, she had let the cat out of the bag at last. Her attacks on the Greek language and literature were now open to public comment. In less than a week Thegnhurst drawing-rooms were able to add point to their vague general feeling against Miss Peele. They had always guessed—they now knew she was a blue-stocking, a strong-minded woman. She was a finished Greek scholar. Nay, she knew Hebrew, Sanscrit, Arabic! What did she not know indeed? She was an unmitigated mass of learning. She was *deep*!

Her eccentric course of conduct during the Creed, long ago given up by her in common with other passing phases, was avidly remembered. She was undoubtedly an unbeliever as well as a blue-stocking! ‘She is a what-you-call-’em—a—a Positivist Darwinite!’ gasped Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith.

‘She’s a frump!’ ejaculated her neighbour, the dear little widow. ‘I know it’s not nice to say so, but she *is*!’

Calls, which had occurred in Miss Peele’s life like the rare detonations of a dying fusillade, now ceased almost altogether. Octavia’s
Greek

Greek lexicon had achieved her isolation. She was now as much disregarded as a fallen minister at the court of a despot.

But, though scarcely called upon, she was not actually cut. The kind of honour, of *esprit-de-corps*, which actuates Thegnhurstians to a creditable extent, forbade that. Having once made her acquaintance, they did not cease to receive her; they did not even exclude her from their more formal gatherings. To the squire's yearly ball Miss Peele was duly invited, albeit, when there, her wall-flower presence was a delicate irritation to many. To Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith's annual picnic Miss Peele, surrounded by an irksome aura of knowledge and wisdom, also went, as well as to an 'At Home' at the vicarage and a 'Small and Early' at the little widow lady's, both of which entertainments were biennial. But outside the pale of these, there was no social life for Octavia in Thegnhurst. Months at a time would pass without bringing her those little spells of polite intercourse with her kind, which, in the country, are such a relief to all but hermits. Weeks—nay, irregular periods, verging on three calendar months—would pass without her being visited by anybody more clubbable than district visitors in search of small donations. Time began to hang leaden on Octavia's hands. Her spirits began to droop fearfully. Old Hugo Peele could give her no comfort. Absorbed as he was in the study of an abstruse and antiquated branch of science, which he pursued with senile persistence, the dull non-human atmosphere of Thegnhurst was entirely congenial to him. When, with an old man's feeble pace, he left his study to walk abroad in the world, it was the fields, the common side, the hills which he sought—not the society of his kind. He avoided people, and they equally avoided him. To the generality of Thegnhurstians he was indeed a sort of superannuated necromancer, dowered with much dark knowledge which it was just as well not to examine too closely. And to him Thegnhurst society meant simply a succession of masks without import of any kind.

For many months Octavia walked out every other day with her father. The pair paced along very slowly, and talked very little as they went, and the effect of these solemn perambulations on the young lady's spirits was not hopeful. At the close of one of them, when the red December sunset was dyeing the westward heavens, and all the landscape of winter fields looked brown and chill as some uninhabited desert, Hugo awoke from abstraction to find his daughter in tears.

'What's the matter, child?' he queried affectionately, for to him this daughter was dearer even than his mistress Science.

'Oh,

'Oh, nothing,' said she; 'nothing, except that——'

'Well, dear?' said Mr. Peele, weakly fumbling with his boots round the rickety door-scraper at the top of the cottage steps in Mudleigh Road.

'Except that I wish I were anywhere but in Thegnhurst,' she almost cried.

'Why, where else would you be, little one?' was the half-querulous rejoinder.

'Oh, anywhere,' said 'little one,' who, by the by, was some five or six-and-twenty; 'anywhere among intelligent, sympathetic people!'

'Nonsense,' said the old man, with a touch of irritation in his voice. 'Among intelligent people, as you call them, you meet with nothing but intellectual arrogance and literary jealousy. Do you remember London and its crowd and smoke?' And he cleared his old throat energetically at the thought.

Octavia remembered the delights of the British Museum Reading-Room—they were delights to her—enjoyed for all too short a season years ago, and a genuine sob choked her further utterance.

At supper-time the old gentleman discoursed at some length on the beauty of the rural life.

'The country is always sublime,' he said, as he peeled his orange. 'And solitude is good, and so are books, and so is study. What I always am saying to you, Octavia, is, "Engross yourself in some great overmastering study," as I do. Take up any subject you like, but engross yourself in it when once you have taken it up! *Man muss immer etwas studiren!*—you know Professor Schweinfleisch's motto: "One ought ever to be studying something." Ah, there is all Germany in that saying!'

Octavia wept silently in her bedroom at night, but her tears this time were not for herself. They were for that dear, feeble, white-haired father, that ineffectual, indefatigable follower after truths which men had discredited. Her father's lonely, ascetic life, his severity of ideal, his practical failure, thronged her imagination like the several movements of a romance. Her heart was wrung with infinite tenderness, infinite pity, and in an access of soft-hearted remorse she determined never again to sadden him with her discontents.

It was during ever drearier growing months, each day and hour of which made Octavia feel more petrified in heart and head, that good news reached the cottage at Thegnhurst. A cousin of Miss Peele's, a bright little worldly-wise woman, wrote to say that she and Tom, her husband,

husband, were thinking of coming to live in Thegnhurst, 'as Jimmy and Alec are both being sent to Harrow, and we want to exist as cheaply as possible till such time as they can shift for themselves or Tom can get something to do.' Further on in the same letter she mentioned that, as there was a good preparatory school at Thegnhurst, they were thinking of sending Dodo there.

Dodo was the name by which these lovers of sobriquets knew Master Eustace MacLeod Featherstonehaugh Peele, their youngest born. And Octavia brightened up considerably at the thought of seeing the dear little lad again. She was stirred into cheerful activity too by the house-hunting and school-hunting expeditions she was now called upon to undertake in her cousin's behalf.

In another fortnight Tom Peele arrived on the scene. Tom was a most deliberate man, whose sentences took many minutes at a time to deliver.

'Octavia,' he said, with sharp solemnity, as at close of day they stood in the roadway outside Hugo Peele's cottage. 'Octavia, listen to me! Pay attention, please!'

Miss Peele listened, bowing her head with the meekness which was characteristic of her.

'I think—that—that—um er!—that' (a pause, during which his wife would have impatiently counted sixty below her breath)—'that the houses you have been looking at for us won't suit us at all!'

The last part of this rather chilling sentence came with a rush, and after its delivery Tom drew a long breath, and rested in the manner of a finished orator.

'I think,' he continued, 'we want a cheaper house! This one' (a pause, during which his mind seemed to wander dreamily over the scenes of a happy past)—'this one—this little crib next door to yours—will—um er—will' (his wife would have got to sixty-five here)—'will exactly suit us!'

The crib in question was even smaller and less convenient than the Peeles', and Octavia felt a little feminine thrill of pleasure at the thought that this mysterious and experienced Tom and his socially brilliant wife were going to descend thereto. Together the cousins went and looked over the house. Tom approved its every shabbiness, and became its tenant before leaving for town by the last train.

A few days afterwards Maggie, his wife, and Dodo, his youngest born, came and took possession. 'You great goose,' Maggie had said to Tom in the tender privacy of midnight, 'what made you take that

wretched little box next door to *them*? You know, the whole thing's an experiment! They may be well in with the Thegnhurst set, or they mayn't. If they're *not*, where are we?'

However, after her instalment in the said box, Maggie behaved, to all appearances, admirably. She fell on Octavia's neck, wept a very little, poured out a pathetic tale of narrowed means, and ended by the hope that in future they would be able to face the miseries of shabby gentility shoulder to shoulder, as behoved cousins and next-door neighbours.

Octavia, after listening to this confession, felt herself a new creature. The coming into her quiet life of this brilliant, bustling lady filled her with intimate excitement. She kissed Maggie with an effusion of grateful sympathy, and repaid her tears with heartfelt words and many pressures of the hand.

For some months after the arrival, Tom Peele's wife was never out of Hugo Peele's house except at meal-times. But gradually—very gradually at first, then with increasing swiftness—a change began to come over the cordial relations existing between the two households. Octavia noticed that Maggie came seldomer and seldomer to see her. She noticed, as she looked out of the dining-room window, that the *élite* of Thegnhurst were calling on Maggie. She noticed, too, that Maggie went out presumably to return their calls, and that in passing Hugo Peele's garden-gate she looked straight ahead of her, and hurried her pace, as though not wishing to be recognised and stopped.

The little worldly woman was in fact making great social way in Thegnhurst. People were charmed with her. They were seduced by her bright and apparently artless allusions to her grand relations—to my dear old grandfather General Sir Monro this, and my poor dear friend the Countess that. They adored the particular kind of poverty she practised. For poverty with Maggie Peele was practised as an art. She knew how to make it pretty, almost fashionable. Her clear-cut well-bred English was never more pleasant to listen to than when economy, and the Civil Service Stores, and the revivification of last year's gowns, were under discussion. Her caustic wit was never more mirth-provoking than when she mimicked the rustic tones of her poor little Salvationist housemaid, or described the ejection from her premises of the tipsy cook. Maggie, by the by, somehow managed to keep three servants, a very grand establishment, according to Thegnhurst ideas. Above all, people liked and approved her religious views, her politics, her contemptuous attitude towards prigs, faddists, geniuses, and

§ LA PIA
by
Dante Gabriel Rossetti



and the socially shabby. They were indeed never more happy than when they found themselves sitting in her æsthetic little back drawing-room, drinking tea out of some rare old china, which Maggie sometimes declared had been bought at 'dear old Simla,' and sometimes boasted to be a present sent by the Duke of Punchestown from 'one of those funny tumbledown places in Italy, you know.' In the end their approving affection found voice through Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith. That lady, sitting glorious by Maggie's fireside, where the dearest of brass kettles reflected itself in the art tiles within the fender,—that great lady was moved to cry out, 'O Mrs. Peele! why *don't* you come and live among us? The Grove is such a way from this! Do come and live in the Grove: we shall feel that you are really our neighbour then!'

The 'Grove,' be it said, is the Mayfair of Thegnhurst. To live in the Grove is to be among the socially elect. It is the boast of the 'Grovites,' as they are enviously named, that they all call one another by their Christian names, that they are always in and out of one another's houses, and that, towards the outer world of commerce and ungentility, they oppose an impenetrable and unchanging front.

'Your neighbours surely won't prevent your joining us,' said the plaintive little widow. To which Mrs. Maggie replied with an indescribable little grimace, delightful to the delicately humorous sense of the company. These other Peeles were never definitely named to Maggie by her new allies. It was tacitly felt that to ask such a dear, clever woman whether she was any relation of that odd girl, Octavia Peele, would be to insult her. And Maggie, on her side, adroitly took advantage of this delicacy, and left her relationship to her next-door neighbours a matter of the supremest doubt. She had early guessed that the Hugo Peele element was indifferently regarded, nay, even unpopular, in Thegnhurst, and neither by word nor deed did she ever connect herself too irrevocably therewith. Well, the upshot of all this was that, in no long time, the Tom Peeles left their cottage in Mudleigh Road, and ascended into the charmed liberties of the Grove.

'Darling Tavie,' said Maggie to our heroine, who had been slaving to pack up Dodo's school-books and cricket-bats on the day of the flitting, 'we must see as much of one another as ever when I am settled in the Grove!'

'I do hope so,' said Octavia disconsolately. 'But I know what going to live in the Grove means!'

'Oh, nonsense,' said the other.

Still, 'darling Tavie' was right. From the very day that her
cousins

cousins settled in the patrician quarter, in a little house standing midway between the demesnes of the Cholmondeley-Smiths and the Ponsonby Bakers, they began to treat her as did the rest of Thegnhurst. So little indeed did she see of them that she grew shy at the mere thought of walking the quarter of a mile separating her father's house from the terraced Grove, and contented herself with asking curly-haired Dodo, whom she met in the fields, about his parents' health and doings. The child did not always respond very willingly. When he chanced to be running about with other sailor boys he even tried to shun cousin Tavie. The fact was that his new companions, having often heard her rather unmercifully discussed by their elders, shouted at the mere mention of her name in a way that chilled and puzzled his poor little wits.

Tavie noticed that the child too was estranged from her, and her poor heart, craving always for sympathy, was sometimes fit to break outright. There is a nadir in the existences of those many quiet women who are not unendowed with nerves or a critical faculty to which men can never wholly sink. Men are always able to escape to a certain extent at least from the gnawings of the introspective tendency which is born of nerves. But women in Tavie's position cannot. A hundred bonds bind them to the rack—bonds of filial duty and affection, bonds of helpless dependence and inexperience. Octavia, in her wildest moments of revolt against her chilling unsocial existence, was always sure to be pricked by a sort of conscience which spoke to her of her father and of his foibles as of something unutterably sacred. Her father's chief foible was, of course, a delight in rural Thegnhurst, lonesome Thegnhurst, and this delight was an iron law to her.

Under similar circumstances a more commonplace girl would have turned to religion for solace. But religion, in the ordinary parochial sense of the term, was impossible for this highly critical nature. Octavia's nearest approach to the religious state was a certain self-pity, a certain constant soreness of mind and heart, a certain half-mystical, half-pessimistic affection for failure and weakness in others.

It was while Miss Peele was deeply affected by this long-drawn morbid phase that Tom's wife, who was now fashionably metamorphosed into Mrs. Hatherley-Peele, came down upon her with an offer.

'O Tavie dearest,' she said in her most *empresé* manner, 'you are just the body who can do me a service. The vicar has asked me to take a Sunday-school class for him. Now you know I can't bear children, especially poor children. It's very wrong, but I can't help it.

Now

Now I know *you* are a dear obliging creature, and won't mind helping me, will you, Tavie? I want you to take the class for me—there! They are all little boys; you can easily teach them. Just talk seriously to them about Catholic doctrine, and try and knock Dissent out of them. You know the kind of thing!'

Octavia loved children sentimentally, and the children of the poor touched her above all others. But how could she undertake Sunday-school work? However, her timid objections passed off the hard narrow surfaces of Mrs. Hatherley-Peele's mind like water off a duck's back, and at last the young lady agreed to accept the 'offer,' subject to the vicar's decision.

Maggie marched off in high feather. She felt she had done an act of supererogation in thus offering what she did not want to her eccentric and uncomfortable cousin. Octavia, on the other hand, feared she had half-promised where she could nowise perform. So she wrote to the vicar to explain her scruples. It was a bold stroke, and the reverend gentleman thought it a very odd one. The letter was of the kind a George Eliot might have written at the age of twenty, supposing, of course, that the great authoress had been other than evangelical at that age. It was a clever letter, a subtle, almost a profound letter, and its every sentence put the question whether it was not permissible for an Agnostic, touched to the heart by the love of little helpless children, to influence them under Christian auspices.

The vicar, good, worldly, scarcely literate man that he was, could make nothing of it. He handed it to his wife; she discussed it with other ladies; and the highly logical upshot of their deliberations was that it was very 'deep,' but that Miss Peele ought none the less to come and teach in the Sunday-school, as its educational staff was always short-handed, especially during the lawn-tennis season, which was then in full swing, and had proved up to date a tiring, flirting, marrying affair, involving much late rising on the Day of Rest.

So Octavia began to teach in Thegnhurst Sunday-school. And we venture to opine that during the whole history of those laudable institutions they never boasted a stranger exponent of divine truth, as it is understood by young ladies in the country. The classes were all held in one large parish room, and it was perplexing to notice how all the children who did not happen to be under Octavia's care constantly stole envious glances in her direction. Miss Cranley's pupils were allowed to kiss her pretty frequently; but that privilege did not prevent them from openly expressing their wish to join Miss Peele's
little

little band of urchins. Miss Cholmondeley-Smith's and the little widow's pupils were initiated into the mysteries of St. Athanasius' Creed by means of sundry 'bobs and nips,' and small but sounding slaps; and *they*, of course, longed to go and group themselves round Octavia. It seemed as though she commanded a charmed circle. Her half-dozen sturdy little disciples seemed to the other children to be sitting in elysium. Their miniature smock frocks or velveteen jackets appeared to excited childish imaginations in the light of heavenly garments. Their ruddy, earnest faces, their linden curls, and solemn eyes suggested transfigurations on a small scale.

And no wonder. These Sunday mornings with Octavia Peele were the most charming, easy, social affairs imaginable. Fancy this! a mention of David and the lion would lead in the most natural way to a discussion upon lions in general.

'Oi've seen a loyun!' little Albert Edward Ockenden would shout, in imitation of the bluff manner of his father, the ploughman.

'So've us!' the others would hasten to inform him.

'So've oi!' would pipe a minute rustic, all by himself, after the chorus had subsided.

'Oi've seen a menadgerry!' some one would add with vanity in his tones.

'No, ye ha 'n't!'

'Yes, I seen un!'

'Yeou dunno a cammul when yeou sees un! My father's a soldier: he've rode on un in Americky!'

'Well, but tell me about David,' Miss Peele would gently remonstrate. 'What was he?'

'He wur a bwoy, Miss! He frighted birds, he did. I'm a goin' to the bird-scarin' when *Oi* be big. Then oi'm goin' to droive ingines! My brother Sam'l—he droives 'un! Sh! Sh! Sh!'

'What did David do when he saw the lion? Now, Charles Pottin-ger, you know the answer!'

'Yes, Miss. He tuk a rock and fotched him one over the nose, he did! He did'n run away! I should have! I'd a gone up a tree like a flash o' lightnin' if I'd a seed a loyun. Oh!' and the youthful aspirant to theological culture shuddered again. It was all very irregular, and not a little profane, but the children adored Miss Peele for it with a loyalty passing description. They brought her in quantities of the field-flowers she loved; they smiled towards her when they met her in the road, as though their little rustic hearts would

would burst with pleasure. All this homage was warmth to Octavia's heart, and her sole fear—a foolish, aching, feminine fear—was that some one should tell these masculine babes that she was not pretty, and so really not admirable at all.

Thegnhurst was vastly nonplussed by Miss Peele's success in her new and undreamt-of sphere. To quote their own phrase, people 'couldn't make her out at all.' She was ladylike—they had long ago admitted that. She had seen something of the world in the ordinary polite way; and now she was teaching in the Sunday-school, and presumably teaching the proper thing, to judge by the children's approbation. And yet she was 'Miss Peele,' a name with a connotation! What a strange puzzle she was, to be sure! Yet the very fact that she puzzled the Thegnhurstians so began at length almost to interest them. They made some advances to her, and Miss Cranley, without committing herself to a call, even asked her to help at a bazaar.

It was at this rather dreary function that Octavia, who felt less in touch with the other Thegnhurst ladies than ever, was presented to Mr. Cyril Bertram, of Trinity, Cambridge. The introduction was part of one of those distinctly spiteful little plots which amuse the Grovites when, as is sometimes the case even among such well-bred people, their better feelings chance to be in abeyance. Mr. Cyril Bertram, tutor to the vicar's little boys, was looked upon among the governing ladies of the Grove as a prig of the worst order. He was certainly the full-blown product of certain kinds of academic coteries. That is to say, he wore a wavy mane of hair and a terra-cotta-coloured tie, professed 'earnest' views as to politics and ethics, spoke much of 'Economics' and of the 'Purpose of Life,' and was understood to know more about Ibsen, Hegelian thought, the exact sciences, and the inner meaning of Robert Browning, than most other clever young men of four-and-twenty.

He was now presented to 'that odd girl Tavie Peele' in order that the governing ladies might have the fun of watching two birds of one feather flocking together.

'I do believe the creatures will flirt,' said the plaintive widow to Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith, to whom she always allowed herself the most intimate confidences in public. And certainly poor Octavia went as near flirting that day as she ever did in the whole course of her life. Cyril Bertram began by professing himself quite too bored with the Thegnhurst people.

'They are awfully unintellectual!' he sighed. Octavia echoed him with a certain diffidence, for she was not, after all, a University man of

repute, and did not therefore venture on strong opinions of that kind. A species of mutual forbearance for the Thegnhurst set, their ideals and point of view, became apparent as the pair talked, and greatly assisted the give and take of culture. It is lamentable, but true, that people always sympathise most when they nurse some contempt or dislike in common! Octavia, poor simple Octavia, was no exception to the rule, and she glowed again as she listened to this modern Crichton's discourses on all things under the sun—the academic sun, we should say.

‘Oh, if I could only have gone to Girton or Newnham!’ she sighed with genuine *naïve* regret.

The Thegnhurst ladies who watched the colloquy were delighted. Whenever feasible they exchanged little mutual signs, and some very young ladies even giggled! But Octavia was too excited to notice anything; and when Mr. Bertram went home to teach his charges Latin, she too walked off in the direction of the Mudleigh Road, feeling as though she trod on air. Soon, however, a change came over her thoughts, and by bedtime, in a weary fit of self-distrust, she could not help reflecting that she was the plainest of unfashionable creatures. ‘Oh, such a plain girl! Oh, so unlike the rest of the world!’ she ejaculated, feeling more bitterly sensitive as to her shortcomings and defects than ever before. ‘He will never think one thought of me! Next time we meet he’ll have forgotten!’ But this was not the case.

At the squire’s formal dance, which occurred in a few days, Mr. Bertram singled her out from among the wall-flowers, and boldly proposed that they should sit out the lancers. Having done so, they sat out a valse and a polka, and two other vales; and, at last, Octavia’s head seemed fairly turning with excited interest.

It was during one of her most ecstatic gushes of conversation that Cyril, slightly yawning, dropped a fateful suggestion.

‘I wonder,’ he said unemotionally, ‘why you do not read more obvious books than those you have mentioned. Spanish is very charming of course; but literature, like charity, should begin at home. Should it not, Miss Peele? Now why do you not go through a course of English poetry from Chaucer onwards?’

Cyril Bertram dropped his suggestion carelessly, inattentively, as became a professional giver of good advice. But Octavia seized on it as on an oracular utterance. When the Thegnhurst fly had dropped her at her father’s door that night she was ready for action, and going into the dining-room, seized on the first book that met her eye, a
volume

volume of Coleridge, and began furiously to read. It was very strange, she thought, that the extreme beauty of certain lines had never struck her before.

It was stranger still that when she took up Keats, and read through the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' the words seemed to take to themselves wings, and to soar away through a luminous haze thrilling with unutterably melodious sound. Then a rain of many perfumes fell around her; the walls of the room melted away; she was walking in a gorgeous and mystical paradise.

The little servant, coming downstairs in the morning to shovel old Hugo's tobacco-ashes out of the grate, and, generally speaking, to make pretence of dusting, was startled half out of her five wits at seeing Miss Peele, with dishevelled hair and staring eyes, half sitting, half lying on the hearth-rug among a heap of open books.

'What *is* the matter, Miss?' she gasped at length.

'Oh nothing, Mary,' said Miss Peele, but her voice was so strange and shaky, and she followed up her disclaimer by such a manifestly hysterical laugh, that Mary, like a wise girl, bundled her off to bed without asking any further questions.

Miss Peele, heir as she was to a long line of neurotic students and eccentrics, surcharged too as she was by a tumult of novel feelings, had simply paid a penalty to exasperated nature in the shape of an attack of hysteria. Yet, alas! there was no one but Mary, poor ignorant Mary, to warn her of the danger, in her instance, of such attacks. After a day in her bedroom Octavia thought she was herself again. Indeed, she was loth to admit that she had been anything but herself on that strange night of poetry and ecstasy. She felt herself a woman of balanced and rational mind; feminine weaknesses were therefore, as she imagined, beneath her notice, if not wholly impossible in her case.

Keats, Coleridge, Rossetti, and a host of others became her daily reading. She went through their pages with a passion of eagerness which lacked sanity, with delight which thrilled her abnormally. At the end of a month she had discovered and acclimatised herself in an atmosphere hitherto unknown to her—the atmosphere of the poets of beauty. The strange *névrose* excitement in which she constantly found herself had its effect on her speech, her point of view, her very looks. Next time Bertram saw her—it was at the widow's 'At Home,' next door to Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith's—she looked so strangely distinguished, and spoke with such wit, such brilliant sureness, that even the accomplished

accomplished apostle of things in general was startled into a sense of inferiority.

Almost in a tone of admiration he cried out, 'You should write a book, Miss Peele!' the writing of a book being, in his estimation, the supreme end of all emotion and effort. Octavia thrilled and thrilled with pleasure at his words. 'Fancy his thinking me worthy to write a book!' she reflected.

And with his august image in her heart, and his approving words ringing in her ears, she set about composing that extraordinary collection of *Letters to my Lover*—letters never posted, be it said—which has since made her fame.

In societies such as that of Thegnhurst everybody is in some sort under the *surveillance* of everybody else. Having thrown 'that conceited young Bertram and that odd creature Octavia Peele' together, the Thegnhurst ladies watched over them with the eyes of lynxes, if we may be permitted a metaphor so rude. They watched over their little bouts of conversation; they saw Miss Peele waxing excited and animated beyond the limit prescribed by the code of their drawing-rooms. And they decided, firstly, that she was by way of flirting in a desperate manner; and, secondly, that her flirtation must be nipped in the bud.

'Miss Peele trying to *flirt*!'—the thought shocked them; it was abnormal. So, without consciously taking counsel together, they each and all began to make things more uncomfortable than usual for Cyril and Octavia. Mrs. Hatherley-Peele was foremost in this almost imperceptible crusade, for her 'dear Tavie' was becoming unpleasantly prominent as a subject of small talk, and she feared that in no long time the odious word 'cousin' might be breathed abroad. Accordingly she arranged for Cyril Bertram's exclusion from two or three functions, which was an easy matter, seeing that the ladies of the Grove always submitted their lists of guests to her before actually issuing their invitation cards. And, in the next place, she boldly, bluffly, twitted Octavia with her odd conduct towards 'that ridiculous young university man,' and warned her that she was in danger of becoming a laughing-stock.

At this our heroine winced terribly; and the next time she was in the same room with Mr. Bertram felt far too self-conscious and miserable to notice him. He, on his side, had been admonished by Mr. Parker Cope, the curate, who as a rival coxcomb detested him cordially enough. And on the occasion poor Tavie cut him he felt quite relieved. A fortnight or so afterwards he was travelling off to higher spheres,
where

where young ladies, who were pretty as well as clever, would be sure to worship him as of old, and where dons' wives would pour out his tea. As he had bade farewell to his tiresome charges at the vicarage, no thought of Octavia Peele had crossed his mind beyond the vague reflection that she had been 'somebody to talk to.' He had had no time to leave cards in the Mudleigh Road; and indeed, seeing that he professed a revolutionary code of etiquette, *that* did not matter in the least.

The final removal from the Thegnhurst scene of this superior person plunged Octavia first into the sweet sorrow of imagined parting, and then into an ever-deepening melancholy. Would he ever return? No. Would he ever think of her? No. Would they ever meet in the outer world, if ever this weary exile should cease? Again, in all probability, No! As during sleepless nights and dawns this hopeless catechism unrolled itself in Octavia's mind, the image of the vanished god defined itself ever more gloriously upon her mental retina. If she had admired him in awestruck fashion when they were in the habit of meeting, now that they were parted she adored and loved him with the intense force of a pent-up heart. A 'Letter to my Lover' was written in tears every night, and a new and cruelly emotional book was devoured with heartache during the day. The little Sunday-school children were often startled by a shower of tears, which Octavia could no longer keep back; but in other respects their lessons were the same as last year. Nay, they were even pleasanter than of old, for Octavia now spoke and read with an intenser tenderness. Indeed, these children were a great solace to her. 'They keep me alive,' she wrote, 'they love me so!' Months went by, during which Octavia steadily overworked herself, overwept herself, overwrought herself. And then the crisis arrived.

It was an autumn morning that Maggie met her cousin in the Mudleigh Road. These chance meetings were a pleasure to the little worldly woman, for they always brought with them their small triumphs. On one occasion she would tell her Tavie of a grand 'At Home' to which she was going. On another she would beg her to be so good as to come and help dress Dodo for a children's fancy ball. On another she would discourse of the doings of the local picnic club, tennis club, and amateur dramatic society. In proportion as her dear Tavie expressed a simple regret that she was not about to share in any of these gaities would Maggie's descriptions wax eloquent and full of magnificent suggestion. On the present occasion her news for Tavie was of a kind purely personal to the younger woman.

'Have

‘Have you heard the latest *on dit*?’ said Maggie, laughing with pretty contempt.

‘No.’

‘Well, think of it! That awful Mr. Cyril Bertram is engaged to a dowdy, æsthetic, socialistic creature, a Miss Althea Papworth! It’s too screaming! The Grove can’t get over it!’

That evening Octavia wrote in her book of *Letters to my Lover* the wonderful ‘Farewell’ which we have all been discussing of late. Then she sat down to the piano, and sang to her father—sang sweetly, pathetically, passionately, till the old man rose feebly from his chair and kissed her as she sang. The dear, palpable, strangely-excited daughter kissed him back with an anguish of gesture which he could not understand. It was her real, not her written, good-bye to the only man who had ever felt affection towards her, for in the grey early hours of the morning Octavia had passed into that trance from which she never woke.

Maggie, sitting at breakfast with Tom and Dodo, was startled, seeing Hugo Peele tottering up the garden path in front of their cottage in the high places of the Grove.

‘What is it, uncle?’ she almost gasped, seeing the old savant’s grey face at the low French window, and momentarily forgetting to address him as though he were a little child of narrowed comprehension.

‘Come with me for God’s sake,’ he made answer hoarsely. ‘Octavia is ill—insensible. I cannot conceive what is the matter with her.’

Now, Maggie was not lacking in a certain perverse goodness of heart. She was shocked at the old man’s looks and words, and without more ado made ready to accompany him. On their way to Mudleigh Road he seemed to grow dizzy. He walked unsteadily as one drunken with new wine, and Maggie had to pass an arm round his shoulder and support him by main force.

Once at the Peeles’ cottage, the worldly woman, trained by long years of parochial good works, did not allow the grass to grow underfoot for a moment. She bustled off the weeping maid in search of the medical man whom no one had as yet summoned. She pushed and coaxed her old uncle back into his study, assuring him that all was, or would be, well. She went up to the sickroom and made her patient comfortable. She dived down to the kitchen and prepared the beef-tea and other needments which the exigencies of the moment suggested. In fact, minus the picturesque dress, the tender associations, and the
unworldly

SC HAMLET AND OPHELIA
by
Dante Gabriel Rossetti



unworldly spirit, she became for the time a most effective sister of charity.

For a week, for a fortnight, Maggie was constantly at Octavia's bedside. She was a most devoted nurse, a model watcher. But a time came, alas! when the pure enthusiasm of nursing began to fade and give place to a mixture of motives. A 'Retreat' for married ladies was to be held at the convent of an Anglican sisterhood near Thegnhurst, and it was to be conducted by Father Alphege himself! To miss his ministrations implied very severe self-denial, but Maggie determined not to desert her post. She wrote, begging him not to expect her presence among her fellow-penitents. Many of these being Thegnhurst ladies, the Father naturally advised with them as to the cause of Mrs. Hatherley-Peele's absence, and was as naturally informed of her devotion to a sick friend, 'not quite in our set,' as the plaintive widow explained, forgetting whom she addressed. Father Alphege commended Maggie's kindness, but the Thegnhurst ladies went further; they silently voted it the supreme of supererogation!

To a reputation for noble self-martyrdom was soon added that spice of humiliation without which no moral triumph can be accounted perfect. For, when Octavia had been desperately ill a week, the Grove began to call and make kind inquiries in Mudleigh Road with a frequency smacking of remorse for past neglects. Amongst others came the vicaress, not this time armed with a little black collecting-book, but carrying instead baskets of grapes, and jellies, and other invalid necessities, for she too was kind-hearted at extreme crises. The greybeard at whom she had so often shaken a dubious head received her at the front door; and in the nervous excitement peculiar to the time, and without in the least recognising an adversary in his visitor, poured out to her his almost certain hopes of Octavia's recovery under his niece's kind and devoted care.

'Your *niece*, Mr. Peele!' cried the vicaress. 'I had no idea Mrs. Hatherley-Peele was related to you!'

So what had been a vague rumour among the few now became an established fact among the many.

'To think of them being related!' cried Mrs. Cholmondeley-Smith when, on emerging from 'Retreat,' she was informed of old Hugo's speech about his niece. 'To think of it! *Poor* Mrs. Hatherley-Peele!'

Meanwhile she who was the cause of all this display of Christian virtues lay very still and white upon her bed. Only at intervals a

G

twitching

twitching of the pale hands showed that the body suffered a strange reflex anguish. As to the finer essence of the mind, it suffered not at all. Deep down, beyond the outer bulwarks of consciousness, it was alive and at ease; for Octavia, the real Octavia, was dreaming a beautiful dream. All day and all night it seemed that she and her lover were walking in an enchanted land, as little children might, confidingly. And at last it seemed to her that together they passed into soft and sudden darkness, and that he, kissing her on the cheek, whispered, 'I am Death.'

And then Octavia lay even more white and still than before, and when Maggie came back into the bedroom she knew that this was the end.

Miss Peele's funeral was an almost sensational event. In her decent, brisk, charming way, Mrs. Hatherley-Peele went as near performing the part of master of the ceremonies as it is possible for a lady to do. And the result of her efforts in whipping up mourners and marshalling the procession beforehand bore abundant fruit; for when the day of the obsequies arrived, all the grown-up Grove and all the pretty little sailor boys, their offspring, turned out in order to follow the *cortège* to the grave. Poor old Mr. Peele, looking dimly out of the window of his mourning coach, remarked the concourse of amateur mourners, as, headed by General Cranley and Colonel Cholmondeley-Smith, they wound up the road in the rear of the carriages. And he turned to Hatherley-Peele, his nephew in the eye of the world now, and thanked him painfully for kindness at once so signal and so unforeseen.

'How good they have all been to us,' he groaned, 'to you and me, my child!'

That he failed, however, to include the sincerest of the day's mourners in this expression of gratitude is hardly to be wondered at; for certain small children, who erewhile had discoursed about 'loyuns,' were walking quite out of sight, behind all the tall gentlefolks, at the extreme tail-end of the procession, where cowslip wreaths fading in hot little hands, corduroy habiliments, and heartfelt rustic weeping were not likely to mar Maggie's grand principal effects!

But Miss Peele's Apotheosis was not yet! In about a year's time, when Hugo himself had quietly and unostentatiously dropped from what he had deemed the fighting line of science into an obscure and unmourned

unmourned grave, certain papers came, with books and other valuables, into the hands of his next-of-kin, the Hatherley-Peeles. Maggie, busy, sensible, little lady that she was, voted at once that all MSS. should be burnt as rubbish, but her husband was not entirely of her opinion. He had heard somewhere that literary matter sometimes sells profitably, if not in a decent place like Thegnhurst, then at any rate in the eccentric outer world. Hence, after much slow debate, punctured by counting, and the endurance of infinite snubs rappingly delivered by his more intellectual half, he was allowed to select from the pyre in the back kitchen two or three large notebooks, bound in black leather, and adorned with decent clasps. These he submitted, over an evening pipe and game of whist, to his ally the vicar; but the latter could make nothing of them. A month afterwards, however, young Mr. Cyril Bertram and his bride came to visit the vicarage at the close of a prolonged honeymoon. Now, however odd, a bride *is* a bride in Thegnhurst, and Althea found this out to her comfort. She was fêted by all the best people, and her husband shared in her triumph.

At a small, cleverly managed dinner, given in their honour at the Hatherley-Peeles', Maggie, talking literature for the nonce—she prided herself on being able to parody most kinds of shop—mentioned the MS. notebooks to her guests.

'I am *sure* there must be something in them,' she said, addressing the incomparable Cyril, who sat on her right. '*Dear* Mr. Bertram, perhaps *you* would be so good as to glance them over. The dear vicar has them in his desk. They are lying idle in fact, and I am sure we should *all* be *so* obliged to you if you would see whether anything can be made of them. It would only take you ten minutes.'

The hint was negligently enough given. Indeed, Maggie only dropped it for the sake of something to say. But Cyril was quick to take it; for he is, as many of us know, a promising and not too scrupulous editor of certain sorts of latter-day literature. He spent the desired ten minutes, and a good many more besides, over the black notebooks, which he found had been crammed into one of the good vicar's largest disused tobacco jars. And the upshot of his reading was the publication of Octavia Peele's *Letters to my Lover*, a work which for long made a noise in cultured circles, and is now famous amongst the Philistines.

The book, as we all know, is dedicated to Mrs. Hatherley-Peele by the joint editors, Althea and Cyril Bertram, and is prefaced by a charming notice of Miss Peele by one who 'had often the privilege of meeting

meeting her,' etc., etc. It is, of course, full of Thegnhurst allusions, which have made that pretty cynosure of villadom famous wherever people read English. Pilgrims stream thither in the summer, and with the exception of the mere American tourists, the Thegnhurstians are pleased to rejoice at sight of them, for they feel that a Thegnhurstian is being honoured. The *Letters* may be deep, shaky, dangerous—what you will, but you must remember 'they were written by one of us,' as the autochthonous Mrs. Ponsonby Baker is never tired of remarking. The 'Peele Boom,' as her friend the cricketing curate has sometimes jokingly called it, is as much one of the glories of Thegnhurst as the Grove. Indeed, the last-mentioned suburb is in some danger of paling into insignificance beside the Mudleigh Road, where rents are rising in a manner at once fashionable and inordinate.

'Our dear Miss Peele lived there,' murmur the Thegnhurstians as they pass the shabby little house where she and her father dwelt, and with extended lawn-tennis rackets point it out to the vistsors to their garden parties. 'Such a *sweet* girl! And the father *so* charming! Relations of *dear* Mrs. Hatherley-Peele's. Ah, dear me, *how* sad it all was for Maggie! And how *splendidly* she bore it!'

VICTOR PLARR.

THE SONG OF SONGS

THE dawn-wind sighs through the trees, and a blackbird, waking,
Sings in a dream to me of dreams and the dying Spring,
Calls from the darkened heart of the wood over light leaves shaking,
Calls from deep hollows of Night where the grey dew's cling.

Soul of the dawn ! Dear Voice—O fount pellucid and golden !
Triumph and Hope and Despair meet in your magical flow,
Better than all things seen, and best of the unbeholden,
Song of the strange things known that we shall not know.

Yours not the silent months, the splendid burden of Summer,
Dark with the pomp of leaves, and heavy with flowers full blown.
Spring and the Dawn are your kingdoms, O Spring's first comer ;
Lordship and largesse of youth, they are all your own.

Song of songs, and Joy of joys, and Sorrow of sorrows,
Now in a distant forest of dream, and now in mine ear,
Who would take thought of eld or the shadow of songless morrows ?
Who would say, ' Youth is past,' while you keep faith with the year ?

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.

BLIND LOVE



OW shall I tell this gentle story so that they who read may not weep too much for the sorrows that are told therein; for, indeed, none must grieve too greatly, seeing that all comes to a good ending.

This is how a king's love for his wife, and the faithful worship he kept for her, brought great pain to them both, by the working of one fairy's malice, which I shall now tell you of. This king, whose name was Agwisaunce, had to wife a queen whose beauty was to him as a veil hiding from him the fairness of other women. No eyes drew him but hers, nor did the sweetness of other lips seem to him a taste worth having. If I began, I could not finish telling all the tenderness their hearts had for each other. But though their love ripened from year to year, no fruit of it came to them.

After they had been married many years without children, there chanced, one day, into the court of that realm, a fairy possessing great sleight of magic, and such beauty as was not safe to look upon, so piercing were its effects. And she, being received at the Court with much honour, was stricken presently with an uncontrollable passion for the King's person. Such grief falls but seldom to the finer nature of which fairies are moulded; yet, when it comes, it strikes down mortally into the roots of their being; nor can they rest till fate has made accord with their desire.

So it was with this fairy whom love for King Agwisaunce lowered to the very dust of humbleness. Though she traced and traversed to get the better of his heart, never once could she win him to turn on her the amorousness of his eyes, or to pretend knowledge of that to which she aimed. Till at last there came a day when in plain words the fairy made known to him her wound, and Agwisaunce, for his part, gave her a downright refusal for answer. 'I think shame,' said he, 'that a great fairy, such as thou, should seek to come between the love that two mortals bear in constancy and pure trust each to other!' So at that the fairy parted from him without more words; and he, believing her gone, put thought of it away in secrecy and with a light mind.

But that same night Agwisaunce, in the barred solitude of his own chamber, and nigh upon slumber, felt lips that he deemed to be those of his own wife coming and going over his face, and he turned to do honour to her visit in fair amity. Yet he thought within himself, 'Why does she

she not kiss me as we always do, in the hollow under my right ear?' For that was the way these lovers had—a token of things since they were first wed.

Then he lifted his hands to the face that was by his, saying, 'Verily, is it you, beloved?' And at that came more kisses, but no answer. Then the King thought, 'Now, if I kiss her not in the hollow under her right ear, and she ask it not of me, I shall know that there is some estrangement come betwixt her and me.' So then he kissed her between the brows and in no other way; and the other made no complaint at that, only kissing him the more.

Then Agwisaunce rose up, wondering, and made a light to know what plight he was in; yet, when he searched, all the couch was empty—none could he see. Then he passed to his Queen's own chamber, and found her sleeping fast. 'Truly, I have been deceived!' thought he, and returned to lie down. But so soon as he was stretched out at full length again, he felt by his side one that kissed and caressed him without ceasing.

So, at that, Agwisaunce, making an end to it, pushed his bed-fellow from him, saying, 'This is not my own Queen, but some other!' Then softly the fairy's voice spake to him; but he, as not hearing her, cried, 'Go out, thou great light o' love! Art thou not ashamed to follow me thus?' But she: 'Where I have love I have secrecy, but no shame. Lie down and do my will; thy wife shall not know. For none saw me entering, neither will any see me return. Even as I was to thee when thou camest in with the light, so have I made myself invisible to mortal gaze; and where no other can be wise, it is well for thee to be.'

Then Agwisaunce was up in great wrath; and said he, keeping her out from him at arm's length, 'Is not the rest enough, but thou must take thine invisibility as a cloak to thy foulness, and come in by stealth to play the wanton between me and my Queen!'

At which the fairy, seeing that she was not to prevail, cried back on him with fury, 'Ah, virtuous one, now even as thou hast reviled me with shameful words, so will I pay it back to thee again! It is news to thee that even now thy Queen is with child; and of that there shall come a daughter to be a thorn in the side of her parents: for from the hour of her birth she shall be invisible, and so shall she remain till she also play the wanton. And when she shall have played the wanton, then shall that spell be taken off her, and thou shalt see the face of her shame and the shame of thy house, and be sorry at last for the scorn of thy words this night!'

Then

Then the fairy departed, and King Agwisaunce lay down with great trembling, and watched till it was morning.

On the morrow the Queen, beholding his mournful countenance, and his gaze ever at her girdle, wherein he beheld sorrow now grow, besought him by all his love to tell her wherein life ailed for him. Then little by little she drew out from him a part of that story; but on one part his lips stayed dumb, only said he, 'There remains one condition by which the spell shall be loosed and our daughter given to our eyes; but as to that, pray that thou never have reason to behold her face! Rather ask Heaven to keep her as she is born.' And when the Queen asked him what it might be, he answered, 'If I told you so much, straightway your pains would seize you and the child die, born too soon for life to be in it. Never ask me to tell you that!'

So, not many months after, the Queen's time came for her to be delivered; and she wept bitterly over the thought of the child that was to be born like a ghost out of her womb, nor ever to bless her eyes with its beauty for a solace to all her sorrow. Presently there was heard in the palace the cry of a new-born babe; and those that were in the chamber, hearing the cry but beholding nothing, knew that the curse had fallen: for all knew that a curse had been foretold on the birth. But none save the King and Queen knew the cause of it, and only the King by what way to be rid of it.

The King reached out his hands and took up into them the invisible life that struggled and wailed sadly at being born; then the mother, clasping her child to her breast, felt it over from head to foot, and, even as she wept for the useless longing of her eyes, declared that no child so perfectly formed, from the dimple of its head to the cushioned soles of its feet, had ever before been born into the world.

After that came the christening: never was so strange a one since time began, for the priest could not see the babe he held, and had she fallen from his arms she might have been drowned past finding. The whole Court drew a breath of relief when she was given back safe into her mother's arms, bearing the name of Innygreth.

With what trouble and losings and findings again her babyhood was passed, it would be wearisome to tell. But before long the Princess took her life into her own hands and shaped out her own fate. For from the moment that she could walk she became the most surprising and perplexing of charges. Here one moment, she was gone the next, and unless it were her royal will to let sound go forth of her whereabouts, she was more lost to mortal reach than a needle in a load of hay.

But

But gradually, as babyhood wore off, she became gracious and kind in her way, yet sad that she had no other children to play with. At times they would hear her stop in her walk before one of the great mirrors of the palace, and there stand whispering softly to herself. But whether what her eyes saw were her own image or no she would never tell.

All that her touch rested on and warmed became invisible as herself. Her clothes and all the jewels and feathers that were put upon her, warmed by her body, passed out of sight.

Slowly her mind grew in gentleness and grace of her own choosing. That her presence might be known, she took to bearing always in her hand a lighted taper. And all the taper, when her fingers closed on it, became invisible as her dress; but the flame, since she did not touch that, burned clear. So wherever a light went travelling about in mid-air the courtiers knew that Princess Innygreth was in its company.

On her tenth birthday the Princess came to the Queen and said, 'Beautiful mother, would it not gladden thy heart to see only a little part of me, of whom for ten years thou hast seen nothing?' 'Oh, my Beautiful, fate holds thee, and I cannot!' replied her mother.

Then Innygreth, reaching out her hand, loosed from it something that shone as it fell into the Queen's lap; for as soon as she loosed it out of her hand it became visible. And the Queen saw there a great pile of golden hair that shone like fire, which the Princess had cut off that her mother might learn how beautiful she was.

The Queen laughed and cried with joy, as, for the first time, her eyes were blest with the sight of a small part of her daughter's loveliness. And even more did Innygreth herself cry and weep. 'I have given you all of it,' she sobbed, 'because I love you so!'

As the Princess grew older she became very wise. 'Where do you learn all these things?' asked the King. 'You do not read many books.'

'I blow out my light,' said the Princess, 'and I learn things as they are, and not as princesses are used to be taught them. I know many things that you do not. Some day when I know more I will teach you how to govern well.' The King laughed at that; but the Princess was grave. 'To me,' she said, 'all the world is like a glass: I see it, but it does not see me.'

Now, as soon as the Princess drew near to the age for marriage, the King began thinking that to have her roaming free, fluttering the downy wings of her unguarded virginity, was a tempting of God's

providence. Therefore he began scouring the world to find a fit suitor for her hand.

Many came, indeed, to the Court, drawn by the story of her marvellous manner of life, her great wisdom, and possible beauty; but though all were won by the charm of her voice, they dreaded that peace with honour could not come in the possession of a wife over whose doings only the eye of Heaven could keep watch. Some, indeed thought that the spell under which the Princess lay was friendly to her fortunes and a trap to the unwary, and that her invisibility concealed a hideousness which marriage alone would reveal.

One and all the suitors retired with polite elongations of regrets and the King fell to breakfasting on despair; and a trepidation lest his daughter should one day swim scandalously into view before the eyes of the whole Court caught him in the small of his back whenever he opened a door or turned a corner.

Now, there was then serving about the palace a youth named Sir Percyn, he being a lieutenant in the King's guard, and a fellow of most merry wit. All things he did came so gladly off his conscience they had the apparent seeming of virtue. As for his virtues, he cloaked them in such waywardness that men, having to laugh, forgot afterwards to admire. Were he to do any bravery, he covered it by a wager; or a gentleness, he did it by a jest. But the Princess, passing unseen and unknown out and among the precincts of the court, saw Sir Percyn when he wist little who looked at him, nor was making capers to conceal his cherubimity.

It was not long before Innygreth favoured him wondrously, and, with maidenly reserve blowing out the light of her presence, lingered daily in his company, warming her regard for the one man who was the same, whether before kings or behind them.

Now, Innygreth, being so sheltered by her birthright, at once from the assaults and the safeguards men make on womanly innocence, whether to foul or to foster it, had great knowledge of many things that are shuttered from the eyes of most maidens. Therefore she was honest without confusion, and had modesty without fear; and having had no shame for her own body since the day of her birth, had no shame of it in others. Also rank she saw below and over; truly between the crowns that bowed and the crowns that were bowed to, it seemed a little space to her.

Thus she passed down through all her father's court, from the men of state till she came to the lower grades where Sir Percyn made gay—

90 A STUDY IN SANGUINE AND WHITE
by
Charles Hazelwood Shannon



a light of March-moon madness round his head ; and there she stayed and searched no further, having found the unit of her thoughts.

As one learns to love the south wind when it blows full of the breath of flowers, though one sees it not, so Sir Percyn grew in love with the toils of her sweet voice. So much he loved her that in a while she lost with him her power of stolen marches, and came she never so silently and with no light, still he knew her to be there, and the colour would run to his face to meet her as she came. All may guess how after that she knew that her heart held its wish.

For three days she let him go sad, but after that she could no longer withstand the springing tenderness of her love. That time she put her hands about his face, and let word of it go. 'Thou loon, thou loon!' said she ; 'why ever dost thou not speak?' And quoth Sir Percyn, trembling between great joy and sorrow : 'Speak what, thou eclipser of mine eyes?' Innygreth answered, 'Truth only, thou moon of madness! Nay, nay! to be ashamed for loving me so well!' And before he knew what more not to do, her invisible heart lay knocking at his side, as wanting to get in.

Then he, thinking of all her height above him in the world, and the gulf that sovereignty and power made betwixt her and him, held her the more closely for that, and out of hopelessness grew bold ; and he cried out in anger and exultation, 'Nay, now I have thee, I will never let thee go!' She laughed for pure pride.

'Between us,' she said, 'is a great gulf fixed that no bridge can cross.' 'Our love fills it,' he answered ; 'it carries us.' 'To what shore?' she asked him. 'To thine or mine—it is all one,' he answered.

'Thou knowest me,' said Innygreth ; 'wouldst thou see my face?' She took his hand and laid it over her unviewed features. Her knight thrilled to feel the loveliness that lay there. 'Tell it me,' she murmured, 'for till now I have heard no man praise my beauty.'

Sir Percyn, moving his hand as a blind man that reads, said : 'Thine eyes drink the light as the deer drink up the brooks. Thy lips are a rose-garden where the rocks make echoes ; thy cheeks are a land of blossoming orchards ; and thy brows are the gates of heaven. Though I have not seen thy face, now I know it, for my love has filled the gulf and carried me through to the Invisible wherein thou dwellest.'

Now, none need tell what lovers say when they have once said all, nor how often, if they have means, they meet. Between Innygreth and Sir Percyn there began to be long meetings and partings, and the
Princess,

Princess, being free from the bonds that hold others, was like moonlight and sunlight about her lover's ways.

Often at the dead of night she would come into the chamber where he lay, and sit watching him asleep, or, waking him, would hold his hands, and, till pure darkness fell before dawn, music to him with her sweet voice. And Sir Percyn, beholding in his lady a modesty without fear and a trust that dreaded no shame, became afraid with the great bliss of the love that heaven allowed, and trembled daily while she drew him to the heights of her own nature, that, having so much love, had no room for guile.

When he was on guard by night at the palace, he would wait below the roses that climbed to Innygreth's chamber, and if she waved her light to him, then he was up by flying buttress and carved moulding among the reddest of them all, hanging across the window-sill, and embracing Innygreth in his arms. Many and soft then were the words by them spoken; but a sharp-eared crone that was put by the King to be about the Princess caught some sound of them.

She came and whispered to the King how at night there was the sound of a man's voice in his daughter's chamber, and chirpings like birds in the leaves about the window—so many that she trembled and lost count of them.

Agwisaunce, when he heard that, took so large a panic that he stooped down his pride, and night by night hid himself in the arras of Innygreth's chamber to learn how near might be the undoing of the honour of his house. And, surely, on the third night he heard the Princess move out of her bed, and through the window the sound of one climbing the wall without, and presently kisses so many and passionate that, fearing what next might have place, he leapt forth, crying out on his daughter for a wanton. At which word one blow caught him and laid him down for a while prone and speechless; for Sir Percyn, hearing the honour of his fair love slandered, and knowing not that it was the King, fetched Agwisaunce so full a buffet that the thing became high treason. And betwixt this and that, Sir Percyn's head was forfeit by the time the King had recovered consciousness.

So the next day all the Court heard how Sir Percyn was under arrest to be tried for an attempt on the King's life and honour. Nor through all incredulity and bewilderment did any get nearer to the truth than that.

But now more and more the King was seized by a horrible fear lest some fine morning he should find his daughter made visible before his
eyes,

eyes, and her bloom and reputation flown from her like the raven out of the ark. 'Already she goes the way of a wanton,' he said, 'and that is a short road with a quick ending. Though walls have ears, for her they have not eyes. How shall I keep her, then, so that I be not presently shamed in my own palace?'

Now, even while he trembled over his daughter, so contagiously disposed towards her fate, there fell to him, like a star out of the lap of Fortune, a suitor for the hand of Princess Innygreth. The Prince of a neighbouring country, amorous with curiosity for the wooing of invisible loveliness, sent word asking for the hand of the Princess in marriage.

The King showered the news with tears of gratitude, and returned urgent greetings, beseeching the Prince to come in the place of his messengers. Before a week had passed the palace was full of him. He came in high feather, and with a great retinue, eager to behold the unbeholdable that was to be his bride.

As for Innygreth, she kept her peace, and went her ways at leisure, carrying ropes and files and ladders and swords and chain-armour to her lover in prison, that by craft or courage he might make his way out and escape; and all this she did by the spell of invisibility which rested on her. 'But first,' said Sir Percyn, 'I will stand my trial, and declare my innocence before my judges.' And that, indeed, was the wreck of his chances; for when, after long waiting, he was tried secretly and condemned to death, he was placed at once in a narrow cell, where the windows were so narrow that no filing could make room for a man's body to pass through, and the walls were too thick and the warders too many for there to be any other means of escape. But all this was afterwards.

Therefore, at the time of the Prince-suitors' coming, Innygreth's mind was at ease, and she had full confidence that her power should work her lover's release; and as for marriage, she knew that in the end she was her own mistress.

So when the Prince stood before her, and fawned and bowed, she curtsied to him with her candle and told him she liked him well. And the wooing prospered, being pushed on by the King, till a whisper got to the suitor that the Princess was not so discreet of blood as to make a safe wife if none could watch over her. At that his suit also faltered, and he talked of affairs of state requiring a postponement of the nuptials.

Then the King in despair told him what he had never told to man
before,

before, and by what hard condition alone his daughter could ever escape from her invisibility. Then the Prince-suitor, who had a fine presence and a light heart, laughed, and said, 'It seems to me that if the Princess will but consent to like me well enough one day before our marriage, I may lead a fair bride to the altar in the eyes of all men.'

When King Agwisaunce took in the discreet ingenuity of the proposal, he became perfectly shocked with joy; and thought he, hugging his conscience into a corner, 'Am I a father or a monster to devise this thing for my own daughter?' Nevertheless, despair of other salvation so pricked him that he hurried on eagerly the preparations for the nuptials. For all the while terror blew on him in little hot gusts lest his daughter should forestall him and ruin all: since, were she now to appear visible to the world, the Prince-suitor would understand the cause and have plain grounds for breaking the matter off.

The old crone that watched over Innygreth said to her father: 'Often the Princess is not in her chamber, and I know not whither she goes.' But the King, when he heard that, knew and trembled. Therefore to make all sure, he caused every door to be locked on her, meaning to keep her within, a close prisoner, till the morning of her marriage.

And now Sir Percyn being tried and condemned, the hour for his beheading had been fixed; and by the King's will, it was to be at midnight on the night before Innygreth's marriage. As that day approached, whenever the King and the Prince-suitor met, the latter smiled, as it is said augurs do, but the King cast down his eyes.

And now, indeed, despair was eating up the heart of Innygreth, for she herself was behind locks, that try as she would she might not slip by, and she heard from the talk of her women how the night before her marriage was to be the night also of Sir Percyn's doom.

Now the grief that the Princess had no man could see, though her face was bowed down under the foreshadow of her lover's death. Her light she put away, for often the shuddering in her hands might not hold it; but her lips gave out no sound of her sorrow. Only her mother, coming to Innygreth's chamber, heard the soft falling of tears upon the floor. 'Ah, my child!' cried the Queen, and for pity brought the King in, and showed him where a pool had formed itself from that pure sorrow; and she said bitterly, 'Thou canst not behold our daughter's face, yet thou canst behold her tears: see the river of that grief which is in her! Yea, I have heard her heart breaking which I cannot

cannot see ! ' Presently, I think, she will fall dead into our presence, and I shall behold her beauty too late but to weep over it. Is that indeed the end promised for her by the fairy ? ' But the King said, ' That is not the end. ' Though even now he would not tell her how the end was to be. ' This is but a passing shower, ' said he : ' to-morrow she shall shine ! '

Every day brought in piles of presents for the bride, and every night the palace was a-blaze with lights ; but the King was sore at heart over the heavy condition that lay between him and the achievement of his daughter's happiness, and his thoughts grew full of tenderness. He came and felt for her head bowed all low with grief : ' Wilt thou not trust a loving father, ' said he, fondling it, ' that to have thee happy and sound before his eyes is all the desire of his heart ? But thy fate makes the way hard. Only believe that whoever I shall send unto thee, bearing my signet-ring, comes for thy good ; and to-morrow, if thou wilt obey me well, thou shalt be a fair wife in the eyes of all. '

Then, when the hour drew on into night, he took her hand and led her softly to her bed-chamber ; and said he, ' See, I will myself keep the key to thy chamber ; and whatsoever cometh through to thee this night cometh of my love. And this I swear to thee by my royal word, that to-morrow, when I see thy face plain, then thou hast only to ask thy will, and it shall be my wedding gift to thee, were it the half of my kingdom. '

He said to her waiting-woman : ' When the Princess has put off her attire, bring it all forth from the chamber, that she may not rise up again this night. ' For he feared yet that she might rise by stealth in the night and give the slip to her fortune.

Therefore, when presently the Princess had unrobed herself and put out the light of her presence, the waiting-woman brought forth all the attire she had worn that day, and left Innygreth in only her bed-linen, nor was any other garment left for her to put on.

So presently, when all the palace slept, the King gave his signet-ring to the Prince-suitor, and also the keys of every door, and, bidding him God-speed, made haste and departed.

The Princess, left alone, rose up from her bed and found her garments flown. Yet had that hindrance been to her as to other maidens it had not kept her from her lover's side, whose last hour on earth now drew near. Therefore, the door being fast, she opened her window and leaned forth, where so often before she had leaned with the touch of Sir Percyn's face upon hers.

The deep warm summer night shed its breath upon her lips full of the scent of roses. So, remembering him about to die, she put forth her tender limbs and climbed down by the stems of the roses till her feet embraced the cool herbs below.

As she went, great thorns had made wounds in hands and feet, so that ruby drops fell from them and mingled with the large tears of dew that hung on the grass edges that she trod.

She passed by terrace and lawn and bower, till she came to the baser courts and quadrangles where the service of the castle was done. The draw-well was at rest after its day's labour. In the two buckets, left standing for chance use during the night, water was wrinkling in the light of a grey moon. As she was crossing the open, a white hound came and lapped in one of the pails, drew out his head, and yawned with the water dripping off his jowl. Innygreth shivered, for he had not nosed her in passing, and she knew that this was the hound of death waiting till midnight should strike.

By the chapel's west front she passed down more steps, and, crossing the garth, saw a lantern, and two men working under its beams. She stayed then, and saw how with pick and spade they had made room enough in the ground for a man to lie. The mould, as they threw it out fell over her bare feet. 'The midnight brings rain!' said one of the diggers, looking up. And Innygreth turned her about and went swiftly, having looked into a living man's grave.

Then came she to the guard-house, passing between the two sentinels who stood there with crossed pikes. And at the door of her knight's cell she halted, bidding herself have patience; for she knew that presently the jailor must come with the wine and the last loaf which Sir Percyn might eat ere he broke fast on the morrow in the fair house of God amid the company of His saints.

So she leaned her ear to the door, and heard calm breathing within. Then, even in her present distress, she had joy, thanking fate that had let her hold come fast on a heart so noble as this.

Presently came the jailor, carrying the spare meal that was to be Sir Percyn's last; and he opened the door softly, and set it down by the bed, sighing to himself that so fair a youth was presently to die, for all that knew Sir Percyn loved him well.

Ye know well, how where he had let one in he locked in two. She, indeed, sat down on the bed watching Sir Percyn's face; and, feeling the coldness of the prison walls striking into her, she took up her knight's cloak to lay over her shoulders, and covered up her

her feet with the rest of his garments that he had taken off ere he lay down.

Presently she heard the blessing of her own name breathed through his sleep, and at that leaned down her face into the hollow of his palm where it lay upon the coverlet, and kissed it as one kisses the shrines of saints. In a while it closed softly upon her features, as a sensitive plant over the visiting bee whose honey it would take, and a waking voice said, 'Is it Innygreth that is here?'

'Even she, and sorrow!' moaned the Princess, and laid her face against his.

'O beloved,' he said, 'keep those dear eyes dry!' For thick tears traced over him from under her lids, and even then a spot of blood from her hand showed upon his as he reached up to stroke her face. Then he started, clasping her. 'How art thou wounded, beloved,' he cried, 'if this cometh from thee?'

She answered: 'The roses, by which thou camest to me, I climbed down to thee.' 'Oh, blessed sad chance!' he cried, embracing her; 'for now mine eyes have seen the sweet colour of thy blood, shed out of dear veins for love of me!' And as his arms clung round her in bitter sweet joy at that last meeting, he said, 'Thou art cold, love, and trembling, for thy meek body is all but naked in this house of death where I am held captive!' But she said, 'What does cold or pain matter any more? Now I am by thy side it matters not; and when thou art gone, neither will it matter then. I have failed to win thy freedom or mine. I have failed in all but to dig thy grave in the chapel garth by the light of this grey moon!' 'But,' said he, 'though I had failed in all, having gained thee I should be happier in my end than all they who live, not knowing thy sweetness.'

Thus these lovers, each unto each, the saddest sweet things that hearts may make lips speak when parting comes to them. And the Princess took from him a lock of his hair, to have for ever on her heart when he was not there. And he said, 'Beloved, hast thou it safe?' 'In my breast!' said she; but he: 'Now thou wearest it, it is gone from my sight.'

Then she said, musing sorrowfully, 'Though I can come and go as I will, I have found no way for thee to escape; for this window is too narrow and these walls are too thick for thee to pass through, though by stealth I have brought thee file and rope, seeing that what I hold close to my own body shares my invisibility to the eyes of man.'

And even while she spake, there was heard below the tread of heavy feet,

feet, and the clatter and ring of steel arms ; and by that the lovers knew that herewith came the guard to take Sir Percyn forth to the place of execution. Then, while yet the sound grew up the winding of the stairs, Innygreth compassed the full use that she might make of her charm : and before Sir Percyn knew what she would do, she had slipped into the bed and folded herself about him from head to foot. And with her lips to his face, winding her long hair over him : ‘Be quiet, thou dead man,’ spake she, ‘for now my body holds thine safe!’

And therewith those without, reaching the door, unlocked and threw it wide. And lo ! a bed empty, and a cell void, as all eyes might plainly behold.

So straightway went out the cry that the prisoner was loose ; and the guard, leaving the door wide, sped forth to search and stop all ways of exit from the castle.

Then Sir Percyn, lying hived in the warm breast of fair Innygreth, began to tremble at the very greatness of her mercy, and to be held so close in those dear arms. And spake he, twixt fear for his own frailty and worship for her divine charity, ‘Loose me, my heaven, and let us go, for the door stands open!’ ‘Nay,’ said she, ‘lie down, thou dear loon ! For if we go forth together now, they will see thee, and thou wilt be taken. To-morrow the door will still be there, and we may get forth by some secret way, as I shall devise. But unless thou lie still, I cannot keep thee all hid, nor wrap thee safe from men’s eyes. O, my loon, my loon, I have taken thee up to me out of the grave ; and this night I will hold my dead man safe!’

So in the morning, when the King, dreading whether the Princess had indeed escaped (for the Prince-suitor after long search had found her not), and hearing of the flight of Sir Percyn, came in great haste and dread to that cell :—he saw, indeed, that fair youth lying asleep and by his side a woman of most touching beauty, so sweet and pure and lovely an image of the Queen’s youth, that he doubted not it must be his own daughter whom he saw.

And as he gazed, in bitter wrath for all of which that sight gave token, the two sleepers stirred and opened glad eyes each to each. Wit ye well King Agwisaunce heard much sweet speech and worship pass between the pair, ere the Princess lifted her gaze to behold the King’s eyes fixed on her, full of fury. And first she trembled and fluttered at the sight of his wrath, and threw her arms protectingly over her lover to keep him hidden from the King’s eyes. But in a while, so new was
the

the fixedness of his gaze, that she started up crying, 'Oh, my Father, canst thou indeed see me with thine eyes?'

'Yea, wanton, I do see thee!' he answered; 'A heavy sight it is. There thou liest with thy doomed paramour beside thee!'

Then Innygreth lifted herself smiling and said, 'O Father, since now thou seest me, my will is that for a wedding gift thou do give me this very Sir Percyn to wed and live with in happiness and honour to my life's end!'

Then the King remembered how he had given her his royal word; and as she had willed, so had it to be. Therefore is an end come to my story.

Now, had the King been as other men, and let the fairy's will be in the first place, none of these sorrows had come about, nor need any have been wise concerning that thing, nor this have been written. Wherefore ye who like this tale be glad that the King erred not in faith to his wife; and ye that like it not, be grieved.

LAURENCE HOUSMAN.

ON THE SOUTH COAST OF CORNWALL.

THERE lives a land beside the western sea
The sea-salt makes not barren, for its hills
Laugh even in winter time ; the bubbly rills
Dance down their grades, and fill with melody
The fishers' hearts ; for these, where'er they be,
Sing out salt choruses ; the land-breeze fills
Their sweetened lungs with wine which it distils
From emerald fat field and gorse gold lea.
Like a thrown net leans out the ample bay.
The fishers' huddled cabins crowd and wedge,
Greedy, against the rugged treacherous edge
Of their great liquid mine renewed alway.
The fishers have no thought but of the strong
Sea, whence their food, their crisp hair, and their song.

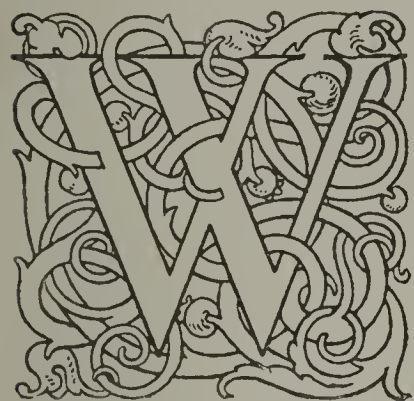
JOHN GRAY.

§ A WOUNDED AMAZON
by
Charles Hazelwood Shannon



THE GODS GAVE MY DONKEY WINGS

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE GODS GIVE MY DONKEY WINGS.'



WHEN the shaggy-headed youth came running to me with the bad news, I feared the gods had taken me at my word. For the gods are indiscriminating folk, given to judging by individual actions rather than by the tendency of a whole life, which in my case had ever been of love to my gentle ass.

A sore time it was to fly away with my donkey. The inhabitants of this strange Thorp which I, after twoscore days and two of wanderings, had happened upon nestling in the roots of the snow-capped mountain, these sturdy people were not so well disposed towards me as I, a canny packman, could have wished, and I knew right well it is ill to drive bargains with folk who look upon one with disfavour. Unwittingly I had drawn suspicion upon my head by being the last one of them all who had had dealings with their maker of gods before he buried himself under the mountain. Now, lying, as it did, forty-two days' journey from its nearest neighbour, you will readily understand that the Thorp depended on its own resources for all things pertaining to life and death, and that when the one whose genius had fitted him to fashion their gods (he made them out of clay-dust, the same material of which we are all created, so that his gods were wholly sympathetic), when he buried himself, the good people were thrown into a great state of nervousness, and were put to their wits' end to find how they might resurrect their lost creator of images. The Thorpsmen were angry with the maker of gods for digging himself a living grave, and determined to bring him forth to his duties again. It was when all were straining their every nerve to accomplish this that the gods gave my donkey wings.

A most unfortunate event happening at a most unfortunate moment. For trade with the good people I could not. No one would buy so much as a drop of my best charm against goblins and ghouls, they were all so taken up with the pretty quarrel between Thorp and Craftsman.

Now I had not journeyed over the shoulders of mountains, around moraine and through long leagues of forest, over morass and bog-land, and across wind-swept plains, merely to satisfy myself as to the outcome of a quarrel, however entertaining in its origin and incident.

Sure am I that, ponder as I may, I cannot for the life of me make out what in man impels him to lay up goods to leave behind him when he dies. This is the way to make death hard, for he that is without the comforts of life can wink at Death as he approaches. But that each must die is a truth that everybody knows and nobody realises. And I, packman, with not a soul to leave behind me but my quiet donkey—the gods protect her!—and with plenty stored by to keep me in comfort for more years than it would fit me to look forward to, still sat uneasy when my pack stood full.

Now, the women of the Thorp (I set no store by the men, who want little from a packman, and that little invariably articles of substance wherefrom no great profit can be made) stood arms akimbo, in the middle of the cobble-paved street, with the goats and children playing about the doorsteps, and the swallows skimming the eaves, and they discussed the grievous topic over and over and over again, until they nearly drove me daft.

The quarrel had reached its most entertaining stage when the Fates willed that mine hostess, a woman young and of goodly proportions, should take it into her kind heart to prepare for me a rare mess of onions boiled in the juice of the mountain grape, and overspread with rich butter melted quietly in a copper kettle and spiced with the spice of the snow-berry. A dish this is that I dearly love, but, alas! it loves not me; so that when I should be enjoying a quiet smoke and the fulness of my paunch, I am doubled across the back of my donkey in the agony of a laboured digestion.

The dwellers in lands called Christian, illogical as are all savages, give praise to their Maker for will-power that on occasion enables them to withstand one or two temptations, but blame a devil when, as is usually the case, the temptation overcomes them. Of course, we of the true faith recognise that the gods create everything, good and evil alike. I we resist a temptation, we praise our gods for giving us the strength of mind to do so; if the temptation overcomes us, we equally blame the gods for creating a temptation stronger than they gave us the will-power to conquer; and, verily, I fear at each year's end we have a heavy balance against our gods. And my account to their debit is made large by this same dish of onions, grape-juice, and butter, which has tempted and overcome me time and time again.

This evening of which I am telling you I had made up my mind to take but a nibble of the sweet-smelling food—only enough, mind you, to let the taste of it overspread me like the pipings of a flute, or the musky
smell

smell of the mountain rose—but the gods give my donkey wings if I could resist the charms of the onions. After I had finished the last sop of the gravy and the last morsel of the onions, and had run my wild-rice cake round the plate to make sure that no particle had been overlooked, I took my staff in hand, and without waiting for the first symptom of distress to rap against my ribs, made off to a secluded spot on the mountain-side in solitude to groan my soul to peace. In the middle of my repentance I realised, as only one in the throes of dyspepsia can, how foolish of me to fiddle away my time in the Thorp listening to the quarrel, and there and then made up my mind to set out on the morrow for around the mountain, and leave the good people to buzz over their own little affairs.

The sun was splashing the heavens with the gold of evening when I again turned my face towards the Thorp. The goats, sedate and drab, were wending their way home, the young ones of them scrambling up the side of every rock near the path to gaze away across the landscape, and to float plaintive bleatings on the cool air of evening. Their tiny bells tinkled in many a golden tone. Next to my own good donkey I know of no such favoured beast as the goat, for it loves the lonely places of the mountain, it seeks eminences, it breathes cool air, gazes upon great views, and meditates among the immortal rocks and immaculate snows, and within the sound of roaring waters. It is only to the great that the gods have given whiskers.

Now, in the Thorp was one, a lad of by-ordinary large head and watery eyes. His lips, too, were thick, and his chin hung loose, exposing, for the most part, his tongue, and his legs bent towards each other so that they touched at the knees. Fate had given him a burly body and a weak head. But that is neither here nor there. He was a gentle lad, and fond of me from the first; so that much of his time was misspent in hanging about my heels when he should have been helping his father to beat clay. His father was the Thorp's potter, an irritatingly industrious body, who spent long hours busily beating, sometimes the clay, and sometimes the boy.

I took pity on the lad, as one always pities the harmless, and allowed him to follow me about and to stand gazing at me, his one bare foot planted firmly in the dust, and his other placed on his bare knee, whilst his arms hung loosely by his side. We seldom spoke. When he did address a remark to me, I found that it was usually rational enough, only with just a wee bit too much of the mystery and poetry of life in it, a sign which all agree denotes the witless. He was wofully
unworldly.

unworldly. I'll warrant the lad could not have sold a half-ell of gaudy ribbon to a vain widow, a trick almost as easy as lying.

Well, it chanced that as I returned from my immolation on the mountain, I came upon this youth waiting for me at the outskirts of the Thorp, near to where the bustling little river sweeps a curve like to the shape of my ass's hoof, and together we made our way to the far side of the Thorp to see to my donkey that she had plenty of fodder and that she was securely tethered, for I had no wish that she should stray far that night. The beast is much given to exploring the countryside during the hours of darkness, having her share of the inquisitiveness of her sex. That evening I sat late. For sure the Thorp brewed good honest liquor of fine body, and plenty of it; and this, I supposed, was to be my last opportunity to swig of it.

Next morning I arose early. When I stepped into the streets the goats were still lying huddled at the feet of the god of Good Dreams, around which, when the god had been placed in the middle of the street, the men and women of the Thorp each evening joined hands and sang their vesper hymn.

I had no more than filled my lungs of the snell morning air that came circling down from the snow-capped mountain, and rubbed my eyes to gaze at the great clouds swimming midway up the rocky heights, when I became aware of the shaggy boy standing among the goats waiting for me. And when I placed my hand on his head he raised his great eyes to me for a moment, and then fell behind to trot after me as I proceeded on my journey to see to my beast. Opposite his father's workshop I felt him lightly touch my frock, and, on turning, discovered the lad gazing away to the east where the sun had just kindled the heavens to a blaze of saffron and gold, and had thrust his sword of flame into the heart of Night until the snows of the mountain dripped blood. The gentle boy left me to enter upon his day's duties, for already his father was astir.

After giving my donkey a good rub-down, I saw her comfortably a-stall with her nose in a generous measure of corn, for many a weary league of rough road lay before us. Returning to the house of mine host, I set my pack in the middle of the floor, and commenced to re-sort the contents. This proved a tedious but not unpleasant task, for the Fates had been not altogether unkind to me in my haggings, and I could palm a goodly number of quaint carvings and some few gems that had cost me little and would bring me much.

Breakfast I ate slowly, with a clear remembrance of my last night's
meal

meal to counsel frugality ; and having finished, mine host and hostess sat with me a while, struggling to get me to better understand their tongue. I was sorry to leave them ; and they, although they would not accept even so much as my keep-cost, I verily believe were sorry for me to go (she was a substantial, juicy woman the wife, with cheeks as red as the breast of the fire-bird), and so it was that the sun had swung high in heaven before I again set to work at my pack. I was in the act of placing in a secure corner some richly carved fool-stones, which I knew would bring me a rare price when I again had the good chance to fall in with the simple Christians, when the latch-string was pulled rudely, the heavy oak door bumped open by a fat knee, and into the room bounded the potter's lad, the wet clay still sticking to his fingers, and his eyes and mouth wide open.

'Thy donkey !' he gasped.

This gave me a sore fright, but it is my way never to show eagerness for news—good or bad.

'Thy donkey !' he shouted again, standing there upon one foot, the other slapped on his knee. I continued at my pack, never once raising my head, for I was busy placing gewgaws of trifling value on top to catch the eyes of sparkish maidens ; ay, and the married women are as vain as the maidens, and whiles less discriminating.

'Thy donkey is stolen from thee ! Thy donkey is taken away ! Thy donkey ! Thy donkey !'

Now the gods know that I have loved them and all their works that are good, and why they allowed this ill turn to befall me only their impudent little selves can say. I did not lift my head, but continued at my work ; but you may well believe that my thoughts were busy over the sore blow that had fallen upon me. The lad stood for a few moments, and then I saw his shadow move across my pack ; I heard the door slam after him, and he was off no doubt to alarm the Thorp. All that now remained for me to do was to close the jaws of my pack and pull tight the straps, so I determined to make a clean job of it before venturing upon the next business in hand. Who could have made away with my ass ! There was not such another beast in all the country. Indeed, much wealth could I have gathered had I placed my donkey on show, as the Christians do with their fat women and princes ; but, to be sure, no right-thinking being would so demean his beast. Who could have taken her ? For many days' journey, far and near, whosoever had made away with her must be a marked man, for all peoples round about were usually far more anxious to gaze at
my

my donkey than to examine my wares. However, that was but a small thumb of comfort for me to suck at and grow fat. At the best I could not expect to get her back other than leg-weary, gaunt, and unfitted for the journey on which I had set my heart.

I was in the act of pulling tight the strappings of my pack, when suddenly booming on the air, like the roar of a genie, sounded the great drum, the Thorp's drum, beaten only when some dire news came to the bailiwick, and was deemed of such vital importance that the inhabitants one and all should understand without delay. At the ominous sound mine hostess, good woman, came rushing into the room, crying, 'The gods save us! some red tidings from him that is in the mountain,' and without more ado she suddenly seized me by the wrist and made off with me as fast as she could leg it towards the ambo which stood in the centre of the Thorp's meeting-place. I cried to her that my head was bare, having indeed but a moment before folded my skull-cap of silk and placed it next my breast preparatory to putting on my mountain head-gear; but pause for a moment she would not, not she! although I noticed that she used her free hand to stick a bit ribbon I had given her in her hair as she ran. But there, away she ran with me, old fool packman, puffing at such a rate that I could not come by enough breath to protest another word.

This was the second time I had seen the people of the Thorp assembled in answer to the call of the drum. They came from all quarters in great haste, for, as I have told you, expectation was in the air, and the people awaited anxiously word from him who had buried himself alive. But when the Father stood in his place on top of the ambo, and told the honest people of the stain that had come upon the Thorp's reputation for honesty, and the great loss that had befallen my heart and pouch, their expressions of anger towards the maker of gods gave place to one of pain. At the bad news that my pretty cuddy had been made away with I could see that the simple-minded people were much distressed. Agitation passed over the throng like the shadow of a cloud across a sunburnt heath, and I soon found myself the centre of a sympathetic knot of people, most of them the buxom women of the Thorp, an experience I took good care to appreciate, for I am fond of sympathy. So a space of time elapsed before the Father could continue his address to the people.

He said that as no spoken words of sorrow would restore the ass to stall, it behoved them to energetically set about finding the thieves, and to prevent the taking of the donkey out of the territory dominated
by

by the just laws of the bailiwick. Fortunately, the gods had been to special pains to create the ass an ambling beast, slow and sedate ; and as the robbers had obtained but a short time's start, and as there were only four passes by which an ass could leave the country, he called for volunteers, fleet of foot, to make for those passes and intercept the robbers. One or other party, he said, must find the ass, or, at the very least, trace of the beast if she had escaped by the pass.

Mine host was the first to step forward ; and before the sun had reached the shoulder of the mountain, I saw the four strong parties legging it away towards the scars in the hills, my youth of the shaggy head well in front of that which made for around the mountain. You may well believe I watched the various parties focus into the horizon with a great longing in my heart that one or other might be successful in restoring to me my gentle ass. She had grown to meditative age in my service ; and the spot on her shoulder was a pure white where I rested my hand as we toiled over the shoulders of the mountains for many long days in many strange lands.

The people, in the fulness of their consideration for my sorrow, had quietly urged me to the ambo, and placed me in the seat of a patriarch, whose soul, poor man, that day fortnight had sat the lawful time upon the peak of the mountain before fading into the blue of the sky, and I thought at the time, and do still believe, that I became the proud position not so ungainly. But the gods had surely turned from me their faces ; for whom should I find standing near to me, so near that I could see the scorn in her black eyes as she surveyed me in my new position, whom but the wife of the Father, to wit, the Termagant herself, as proud as a Christian leech or a Jew beggar. I had only that moment taken upon me the full dignity of my place (for a bereavement that excites pity is wonderfully pleasant to a vain man), when, casting with considerable pride a glance at the people before me, my eye caught sight of her masculine face among the very first. Faith, it gave me a sore turn to see her so near at hand, and willingly would I have slipped quietly from my place and edged away into the crowd but for the fear of the shame of it. For the Termagant had laid heavy hands upon me once, and the bruises I then took on my skin had only as yet turned to yellow about the edges of them. But, keep from hitching and fidgeting in my place when her cruel glance was cast at me—the gods give my donkey wings if I could ! And she would look at the bare spot on the top of my head, which, mind you, was not placed there by age or natural decay, but by some deplorable cause I have never quite
been

been able to fathom, nor my richest salves (applied lustily and with as good a grace as the knowledge of how much they cost me would allow) remedy. So I placed my hands over my face as though mourning the loss of my faithful friend, and kept my eye the while on the Termagant, peeping between my fingers.

I have made it my sure rule since the days that I can remember to tell the truth when out of earshot of my pack. And this is the truth. I firmly believed that this, the second close meeting with the Termagant, was to pass without evil befalling from the wicked woman. As I watched her face, it seemed to my slow brain that she had made up her mind that the stir had nothing in it of particular interest to her, and she commenced to cast about her disdainful glances, and occasionally to gaze upon the Father with pitying scorn. He, poor soul, as much unnerved as I, or more, by her proximity, continued to address the people, nervously rubbing his fat hands up, over, and down, and then up, over, and up, his ample stomach, until in strident tones she told him that he was soiling his best gear, and that he had much better put his hands in his mouth for all the use his speech was likely to prove. Such a course, she said, would at least keep hands and tongue out of mischief.

You who are linked to a woman will bear me out when I say that it is bad enough in all conscience to have a wife glowering up into your face when you are disporting yourself as befits one who has the eyes of a gathering upon him, but to have a wife shoot a verbal dart of scorn at you so that the people may see it quiver in your breast is past all endurance. The Father, poor soul, flushed to the fringe of his white hair, stammered, and looked helplessly at the she-dragon, who tossed her head contemptuously in the air and bade him proceed. She should have been a heathen priestess—a fine figure she would have made with a knife above her head and a human sacrifice at her feet. There are no degrees to woman's heart, as there are no degrees to her virtue. If her heart be not made of rose-leaves, it is of the flint-stone of the mountain.

For some moments the Father stuttered, and at length, with the boldness of despair, blurted out that as the good name of the Thorp was at stake, he had decided that this was an occasion for resorting to extraordinary measures. Since the days his great-great-great-grandfather was Father to the Thorp, when some one disposed to evil had cast a spell over the goats so that they all took to walking backwards, and in so doing knocking over the gods that stood at the street

street corners, to the utter destruction of all proper worship (a calamity well remembered, for it had been crooned to the children by successive generations of young mothers), the action which he, the Father, had determined upon had never been taken. But he believed the people would bear him out when he said that the present circumstances warranted lusty measures. Therefore he bade them all return to their homes, to put things to order, and to do what was seemly and right; and when the sun sat upon the peak of the mountain, each man, woman, and child was to leave home and betake him or her into the house of the neighbour to the left, there to make a fit and proper search of the rooms and premises for the stolen ass. Those who lived in houses at the end of the street, so that they had no neighbours to the left of them, were to cross over to the other side of the way, and in so doing complete the circle.

No sooner were the words out of the Father's mouth than there was a great stir among the women folk, for here was a cutting test of housewifery to be sure, a-knocking at every door without so much as a warning cough. Many a time it is a clean entry that leads to a dirty hall. I could see by the expression that came upon many a countenance that certain overlooked corners at the morning's sweeping, and certain bundles, and certain legs off stools, and such-like, came to the minds of the women, for they all prided themselves on their cleanliness and order, and were loth that their neighbour should find so much as one copper platter unpolished. Most of the good wives were for off without more said, but I noticed that some few were not disposed to show haste, resting easy in the knowledge that all things were to rights at their homes. Mine hostess I was proud to see range herself with the latter, as she well might, for she dearly loved to make herself a slave to her household duties. Indeed, in so doing I think she was not so far wrong, for it gave her many chances to bemoan her unhappy lot, which always does the heart of woman great good.

The flittermouse of the Thorp, a gadabout who was the earliest to discover anything unusual that might be taking place in the neighbourhood, whether it was the first sweet words between two who might become lovers in time, or a fight on top of a rock between horned goats, had at the words of the Father clapped her hand on top of the lace cap she wore and scudded for her house (ill-kept, I'll warrant, although I had never peered inside her door, for I dislike her kind, and can afford to have likes and dislikes, being now on the safe side of life and gear), when even she was brought to a standstill by the shrill voice

of the Termagant. Faith, I had seen it coming, the storm conceived in her mind, nursed in her bosom, and bursting into violent life on her lips. She skirled the single word 'Stay,' and strode towards the ambo where I and the patriarchs were sitting. The gods will bear me out when I say that I have never in any country or clime, among the Bedouins of the desert or the savage creatures who live in the land of mists, laid claim to great valour. So when I saw the she-dragon coming my way, I just gathered up the skirt of my robe and made off as fast as fat legs and generous living would allow me to run, while the folk set up a hearty laugh. But, thinks I, better a lamed pride than a broken noddle, and I paid no heed to their humour, and would soon have been out of hearing had not one (he was the father of my Shaggy-headed youth, and had left his work only because it was compulsory to answer the summons of the great drum—his fists beat against his hips for want of clay) caught me by the flying cope, and when I looked around I saw that the shrew was not pursuing me. Instead, she seemed to have hustled one of the patriarchs out of his seat, and was standing in his place facing the people. These were now gathering close about her for fear of missing one of her words, for all honest folks' ears prick up when they hear the first sound of a scolding wife's tongue. To see that she was not in chase of me gave me heart, and I quietly elbowed my way into position to hear, standing in the centre of a press of people. The gods adorn my donkey with a peacock's tail to spread in the sun if she did not look a terrible sight, the anger having forced her cheeks to a crimson and drawn tight her muscles until the nails of her fingers stuck into her flesh!

'Stay,' she skirled again, although there was little need to repeat the invitation, for devil a one of them would have moved heel or toe away while there was a prospect of hearing her rant. The Father had sunk in his seat on top of the ambo, in a huddle of collapse, for right well he knew he was in for a tongue-lashing, and, by my troth, it turned out that he imagined no vain thing.

'Mothers of the Thorp,' she began after an impressive pause, 'our common sense must interpose to save our homes from sacrilege. Mothers of the Thorp, what is this the anile fathers have proposed? What is this egg that has been hatched by the warmth of the united wisdom of those to whom the brainless, credulous, silly, yet conceited men of this Thorp have intrusted the honour of the Thorp? An ass has been stolen, the asses that represent the bailiwick bray, and the sum-total of the bray is that we are all to be made asses of; that our
houses

90 PERSEUS AND THE SEA-MAIDENS

by

Sir Edward Burne-Jones



houses are to be looked upon as asses' stalls, and we asses are to seek for the stolen ass in one another's homes, for the time being supposed to be the stabling-place of an ass!

'Cast your eyes on the Sire of the asses,' she whirled round, and waved her red hand at the Father, who shrivelled up inside his robes, until only his white head was to be seen. 'Gaze at him! Ha, ha, ha!'—(the gods bless me if her laugh did not send chills running up my backbone like as if I had been gnawing at a tinker's file!)—'I vow you can see nothing but his ears,'—faith, it was a fact too.

'And, pray, let me ask who is he, the only one that is not to be made an ass of, and for whom we are all to get down on four legs and walk? Pray you, who is he? Does one of you know? If so, speak! Does one of you know his name? Does one of you know his people? Does one of you know his errand? Does one of you, any one of you, know from whence he has come? whither he goes? how long he stays? In fact, does any one of you know anything about him except that one evening when the sun shot its angry javelins at the peeping stars, he and his precious ass came up our street and sought our hospitality. Who is he, I ask, that we should creep?

'Since he has sat down on his fat haunches in our midst, have we had cause to rejoice? Has not disaster such as this Thorp never before met with befallen us? Has not our maker of gods buried himself alive, and had not this proud-paunched packman a finger in the pie?

'And now for this precious donkey of his, for which we are all asked to play spy-your-neighbour. I have been told by those that are studying his outlandish tongue that most of it seems to consist of appeals to the gods, and that one of the most frequently reiterated prayer has been, "The gods give my donkey wings!" I repeat it, "The gods give my donkey wings!" Now'—here the artful shrew let her voice drop until it almost lost its harshness, although her looks were as sour as ever—'now, mothers of the Thorp, we know the gods, for we have seen them formed and baked, loved and broken. And if we prayed to one that did not heed, we soon reduced the lazy god to its original clay by throwing it into the stream. But there stands a packman,' her finger pointed firmly at me, and the press of people broke away from me as she spoke, 'there stands one who has implored his gods to give to his donkey wings, and who, now that the ass has flown, wishes us to sympathise with him, to flatter him by exalting him to a patriarch's seat, and to each one of us to cast doubt on the integrity of his or her neighbour by paying a spying visit. No, no! The gods
are

are just. The ass has flown; the ass's master's prayers are answered; and we say the matter, so far as we are concerned, is at an end. There shall be no search. As he has prayed for his donkey to take flight, let him now pray the gods to pluck his ass and restore her to him without feathers.'

Again she paused, and I vainly thought the vixen had done. The god of the Moods had surely never seen such a sudden change as had come over the good Thorp folk, the men and the women. When the virago began her tirade, all for me was sympathy and sorrow. By the time she reached the first breathing-space of her address, the people were scowling at me as they who say loudest they follow Christ scowl at those who cry 'mercy' or 'charity.' And when she had reached this stage, their murmurings swelled to a roar. Now I began to have fears for my skin, for I saw fair chances of having to run for it, as once upon a time I ran from the bazaars of those who search the veda for consolation, and the gods in their kindness have been unkind to me, for I have waxed fat—not so great, mind you, as to be noticeable in a company of good drinkers, but still, I know myself not so fit to act the quarry as earlier days had seen me. Once I was on the point of dashing for it, seeing a fine opening towards the stream, but the thought came to me of my pack lipping full, cracking its ribs with the good things it had swallowed, and good things yet to be disgorged, and I made up my mind to see what lightning the thunder-cloud carried in its weasand. This I vow before gods and men: Every woman's tongue is tipped with brimstone.

A diversion here intervened. A party of searchers was discovered to be returning. Alas! dejected, and without my pretty donkey. Then another, and another, and at length the last of the four, each empty-handed. At this the looks of the people again softened for me; and the Termagant, the shrew, the vixen, the virago (man! I could have wrung her neck, I swear I could), began to speak kindly to me something after this fashion:

'My poor man' (I never could school myself to bear the sympathy of an enemy), 'you see the ass is gone, your wicked words the gods have heard and heeded, your donkey has flown, as any child in this the Thorp (it is the especial care of the true gods) could have told you she would fly. We are sorry for you. But you have brought distress, anxiety, ay, disaster, on our peaceable homes, and you are punished. My good man, for your own well-being, take your pack upon your back, your staff in your hand, turn your face to your road, and the god
of

of Good Speed bless your sandals, and he of Good Fare your stomach. And when tempted lightly to address the gods, think of how they avenge, for, as I have ever found (it has been my guide and support all my days) in this world it is a bridled tongue or a broken back.'

(Believe me or not, as you please, but she stood there before them all with the effrontery of a policeman bearing false witness, and had the impertinence to say this to me, who had my tongue in subjugation before the day she was born.)

'Go your way, fat man, and the god of the Falling Rain wash your footsteps from our land! It may be that your grey donkey is waiting for you in the mists that swim round the waist of the mountain.'

It was high time for me to be off. I made my way through the thick of them, some of them scowling, some snivelling, some gibbering, some giggling. The good wife, my hostess, met me at the door, her chin puckering and twitching, for she had a big heart and it was sore, and she came close to me when she helped me on with my pack and pulled the straps gently. I saw more than one great tear run quickly down her rosy cheek, hesitate, and fall to her swan-white apron. I could not trust myself to say 'good-bye.' It was as well that I had said the words as near as might be earlier in the morning before my donkey had flown—I think I never loved my beast so much as when I felt the weight of the pack, and realised that to lighten was to lose.

All made tight, I stepped into the street. The good folk stood each by his own door-cheek, and the men took off their hats and removed their pipes from their teeth when they saw me step over the threshold. I paused for a moment to gaze at the heavens. The great mountain stood glittering in the sun of noon, its snow-cap immaculate against the blue of the sky. Above my head the mountain gnats threaded a magic dance, and a murmur of insects sang in the air. To leave this peaceful Thorp brought many pangs to my heart. But leave I must.

When I withdrew my eyes from the sky they lighted upon the Shaggy-Head standing in the middle of the street waiting for me, a look of helpless wonderment in his face, and his great fat foot, bare and dust-stained, on his awkward knee. My heart, soft at the time, went out to him, for I knew that he at least would miss me. So caring no fig for the folk that stood mouth-agape, I went up to the lad, stuck my staff in my girdle, placed my two hands flatly on his bushy head, and looked at his great wondering eyes. We understood each other, the boy and I, and although I could see consternation among the people, who were one and all shy of the lad, for 'twas said he had dealings with
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the fairies on the mountain-side—like enough—the two of us stood there in the middle of the quaint street with all the folk pointing and gesticulating, and goats walking between our legs, and the butterflies floating in the sunshine like the souls of little children . . .

‘ Wheee, wheeee, whzeehraw-w— whrzeec-haw-www— wheee-haw-ee haweerzee eehaw, eezee, eezee -haw eeeee, eee e——e ah, ee ahh, ah, a-a-a.’

How clearly her beautiful voice sounded on the calm air! The good folk one and all, mother and son of them, darted in-doors at the sound, as though a witch-bird had cast its shadow across the cobble-paved street. But start not I! The instant I heard the first sweet tones, and realised the direction from which they hailed, I knew it all, ay, without giving it a second thought. I just kept my hands where they were, but I fear me my eyes must have spoken, for the gentle lad smiled into my face. By and by the silly people first peeped, and then ventured out into the street, and next instant off they set pell-mell towards the stable, where I had in the morning stalled my ass. But catch me making a fool of myself! I turned me towards the house of my hostess, and gave the buxom woman a sound, resounding smack of a kiss—her husband had run off with the rest of them, so whether or no he would have minded is no concern of mine—I took off my pack, and put it snugly away right and safe; laid aside my travelling gear, stood my staff in the corner, and made my way to the bin that held the corn my donkey loved to crunch, and on which she had grown a wee bit too gross of late. Poor beast! she had bided in patience a long, long time for her morning meal before crying to me, for those sure of a meal are slow to hunger.

You may be sure I held my head high when I passed among the people, who had been craning their necks for a view of the ass. They, witless folk, could not make head or tail of the matter. But I knew. The gentle lad had slipped away from the shop to have a squint at the beast he knew I loved so dearly, and not knowing that I had taken her to stall, had believed she was stolen. And I, old, foolish, addle-headed, blockhead of a packman that I am, had let the commotion the Thorpsmen set up steal from me the little common sense the gods had ladled into my pate, and it never crossed my mind to go and see for myself whether or no my ass had really flown. But, nevertheless, I enjoyed a quiet chuckle over the head of the affair—to be sure, all to myself, for I at once schooled my face to that look of grieved innocence, learned from the Christians, that so well becomes one who has managed

managed to escape from a very tight corner into which his folly or vice had led him, and from which some one else's cleverness extricates him. The folk looked upon the return of the donkey as a miracle performed, and you may be sure I took no pains to disabuse them of this idea, for folk bitterly resent having their eyes opened to a truth that makes them out tomfools. As for miracles? Well, most miracles I have come across were simply the perfection of the natural. The natural is the one thing that surprises folk nowadays.

When at last I came out from seeing my donkey to rights, I could scarcely keep the people from pulling me to pieces, they were all so eager to do me honour. For a mannerly while I was, I'm thinking, cleverly reserved, but they would press upon me their best in the way of reeming swigs, and policy and pewter urged me to relax and to smile upon them—true, at first a whit superior-like, but after a time right genially—and my recollections mingled with the clouds of the mountain rather early in the evening, although, when they returned to me next morning I was cosy enough in bed, and my sandals laid aside too.

Next evening I found the people very proud of me, for it seems I had decorated the Thorp's chief Patriarchal Goat with a fine string of coloured beads of which the goats and men were very vain. How I came to give away such a saleable article, the gods give my donkey wings if I could explain! But, ah, the hand is open when the stomach's full, which to me is one of the best proofs of the cursedness of drink. If my wits had been about me, I could have made some small thing go very much further, and left the people as well pleased.

ANGUS EVAN ABBOTT.

TWENTY-FOUR QUATRAINS FROM OMAR

- I Khayyám that used to stitch the tents of Thought,
Into Grief's furnace dropt, was burnt to naught ;
The shears of Fate his Life's tent ropes have cut ;
Yea, Hope's sharp Broker sold him—nor got aught.
- II The World gains naught that I live here below,
And my Departure will not mar its show ;
No man has told me yet, nor do I know
Why I came here, or *wherefor* hence I go.
- III The Day is breaking, let us welcome him
With glasses crimson-beaded to the brim ;
And as for Name and Fame and Blame and Shame,
What are they all ?—mere Talk and idle Whim.
- IV Why at the Dawning must the cock still crow ?
It is that by his crowing he may show
That one more Night has slid from out thy Life :
And thou art lying asleep and dost not know.
- V Life's caravan speeds strangely swift, take care ;
It is thy youth that's fleeting, Friend, beware ;
Nor vex thyself for Woe to come, in vain,
For lo, the Night rolls on, and Dawn breaks bare.
- VI The Spheres that turn have brought no luck to thee,
What matter how the Years or Seasons flee ?
Two Days there are to which I pay no heed—
The Day that's gone, the Day that is to be.
- VII Above thine head looms Heaven's Bull Parwín ;
Beneath thy feet a Bull bears Earth, unseen ;
Open the eyes of Knowledge, and behold
This drove of Asses these two Bulls between.
- VIII The Rose saith, ' I am Joseph's flower, for, lo,
My Cup is full of Gold.' ' If this be so,
Give me another sign,' I cried, and She
Made answer, ' Red with gore my Garments show.'

- IX Rose, thou art like unto a Face most fair ;
 Rose, thou art like unto a Ruby rare ;
 Fate, thou art ever changing shape and hue,
 Yet ever hast the same familiar air.
- X Though the Rose fade, yet are the Thorns our lot ;
 Though the Light fail, yet is the Ember hot ;
 Though Robe and Priest and Presence all are gone,
 The empty Mosque at least we still have got.
- XI Open the Door ; the Key is Thine alone !
 Show me the Path, only to Thee 'tis known !
 The idle Hands they reach I will not take,
 Thine Everlasting Arms shall bear me on !
- XII O Lord, have mercy on my enslaved Soul :
 Have mercy on my Heart that Griefs control :
 Have mercy on my Foot that seeks the Inn :
 Have mercy on my Hand that craves the Bowl.
- XIII Creeds seventy-two among Mankind there be,
 Of all these Faiths I choose but Faith in Thee :
 Law, Sin, Repentance, all are idle words :
 Thou art my Hope. What's all the rest to me ?
- XIV The Drop of Water wept to leave the Sea,
 But the Sea laught and said, ' We still are we.'
 God is within, without, and all around,
 And not a hair's-breadth severs Me and Thee.'
- XV Now Thou art hidden, unseen of all that be ;
 Now Thou art full display'd that all may see :
 Being, as Thou art, the Player and the Play,
 And playing for Thine own pleasure, carelessly.
- XVI On these twin Compasses, my Soul, you see
 One Body and two Heads, like You and Me,
 Which wander round one centre circle-wise,
 But at the end in one same point agree.

- XVII The Heart wherein Love's wick burns clear and well,
Whether it swing in mosque or shrine or cell,
If in the Book of Love it be enroll'd,
Is free from Hope of Heaven or Fear of Hell.
- XVIII Whether in Heaven or Hell my lot be stay'd,
A Cup, a Lute, a fair and frolic Maid,
Within a place of Roses please me now ;
While on the chance of Heaven thy Life is laid.
- XIX I lack not hope of Grace, though stain'd by Lust ;
Like the poor Heathen that in idols trust,
Woman and Wine I'll worship while I live,
Nor flinch for Heaven or Hell, since die I must.
- XX Come, friend, the cares of this brief life dismiss,
Be merry in thy momentary bliss,
If God were constant in his favour, think,
Thy turn had never come for Cup or Kiss.
- XXI Let not the World's mass too much on thee weigh ;
Nor grieve for those that Death has made his prey ;
Lose not thine Heart save to the Fairest Fair,
Nor lack good Wine, nor fling thy Life away.
- XXII 'Tis well to be of good Report and Trust ;
'Tis ill to make complaint that God's unjust ;
'Tis better to be drunk with good red Wine
Than swollen with Hypocrisy's black must.
- XXIII No Shield can save thee from the Shaft of Fate,
Nor to be glorious or rich or great ;
The more I ponder, still the more I see
That Truth is All, naught else has any weight.
- XXIV Of Duty towards God let Preachers whine,
But do as I command, and Heaven's thine ;
Give freely, slander not, be kindly still,
That done, have thou no fear, and call for Wine !
F. YORK POWELL.

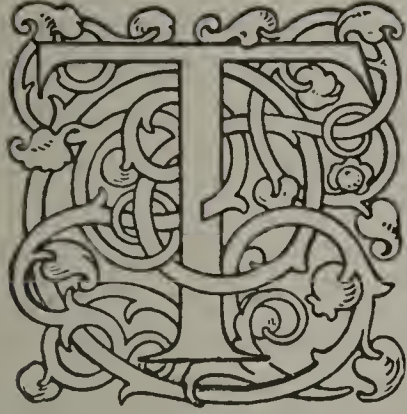
§ THE CALL OF PERSEUS

by

Sir Edward Burne Jones



LIGHT



HIS is the whole story, though it range over no more than a few months. The first forty odd years of this life are pure preliminary, obscurely and fatally composed, to the passage which marches nobly and passionately to an ecstatic end. Until this ecstasy broke across its decline, the heroine's life had so little to be revealed, even through the medium of most powerful lenses! She had lived her life in a neglected mode; to her, *sentiment* of life was only supplemented by *knowledge* of life, never supplanted by it. Like children, she derived support from accepting things as they are; trees which she had always remembered were to her as enduring as the sky; a fallen tree was something tragic. When she was a child, during the night of a terrible storm, a young man had been struck blind by lightning, and four old trees had been blown down. The blind man still desolated to her ear a certain stone passage with his 'Buy of the blind!' and she still called the two remaining elms the Seven Sisters. Here she had a group of impressions: on the one hand she was acquainted with the long-past facts, like anybody else of her age; on the other hand she had a *sentiment* of the thing, not fantastic, nor in any way connected with fear of lightning, in which it was at once ordinary and extraordinary. The government of the country, the queen, the town council, to her sentiment were like facts of nature; while her intelligence knew well enough why the sovereign reigns, that there might have been another sovereign or no sovereign, whence the members of Parliament and the Cabinet come, and the different applications of revenue and parochial taxes. So also with, say, printed books and pictures. The author writes, the printer prints, the binder binds; but in that part of her where lay the undefined, but undisputed, convictions, a book as a determined object had an authority beyond any combination of the elements which produce it. In like manner a certain engraving she possessed of one of the Martin biblical subjects, while it filled her with awe and admiration, had no value as a product of human invention, skill, and patience; the feeblest pencil drawing of a flower stood for more on this footing; perfect knowledge that the engraving was the result of thousands of dexterous scratches made no difference; even if she had seen the engraver bending over the plate with his goggle and gravers, she would not have connected his work permanently with a picture which had hung

hung in the same place time out of memory. May this insistence upon the lifelong rivalry of simple heart and simple brain tend to indulgent appreciation of the heroine's conception of God, comparable to her sentimental notion of any settled fact; for though at this grave point her attitude approached that of most uneducated people, in her case it was in no way answerable to neglect or laziness.

Her husband was a smith; his daily work had been at the same factory ever since their marriage; his weekly wages had varied only within familiar limits. These conditions, in conjunction with her husband's meek disposition, would have secured the evenness of her married life, apart from her sanguine fatalism. The smith went to his work at an early hour of the morning. His dressing was finished completely in the bedroom, even to his top hat. Before starting he took a cup of coffee, which in summer was prepared by his wife, in winter by himself. When the smell of the pipe he lighted in the doorway reached her nostrils, his wife got up. This had been the strange signal all the time, which she had never happened to mention to him. She only heard him leave the house on days when he was a little poorly or the weather was bad, when she was fully awake and listening; for, with an oiled lock, and by holding the knocker with one hand, he left with scarcely perceptible noise.

Until she took her breakfast she busied herself heartily with rougher work; after breakfast the bedroom was set in order, as also the part of the house through which her husband passed when he returned, from the door-handle to the kitchen stove. Next she prepared dinner, and while this was cooking she made her first toilette, rather tidying of her person. The smith came in at a quarter-past one, ate in silence for half an hour, and went away. After dinner her house work for the day was soon finished; she made her real toilette, and settled to needle work or reading, or went out. At a quarter-past six tea was eaten in the sitting-room, where husband and wife passed the evening until supper, for which meal they went to the kitchen again. Then the smith smoked his pipe, drowsed, his wife prepared his breakfast for the morrow, and the house was shut up for the night.

This was the outline of a typical ordinary day, as days had passed for twenty years. Sunday showed an important variation; it differed from the week-day in every one of its outward details.

On Sunday they rose later, breakfasted later; not only was breakfast different in character, but different plates, cups, and forks were used. The smith was pompous, reflective, in broadcloth and clean shirt,

shirt, in the wearing of his oiled hair and embellishments struggling to realise the daguerreotype portrait of himself young. His wife also was contained, formal. The pair preserved on Sunday the attitude of courting days, stripped of tenderness. The smith left the house first, making for the distant Lemon Street Baptist Chapel. Another chapel of the same body was very much nearer, quite close in fact, in the opposite direction; he was a 'steward' of the chapel which took tithes of all his being. When he was gone (he banged the street-door on Sunday) his wife cleared breakfast away, as sedately as if her husband were still present; then she went to the poorer but more aristocratic Bible Christian Chapel in Chapel Street, also very distant from the house, but the only colony of the sect in the town. Returning, she had reached home, and put the potatoes to simmer, before the smith reappeared; he stopped to gad on the way home; you could see it in the grimace of recognition, which his wrinkles were slow to relinquish.

After dinner the husband went again to his chapel; while his wife first did what was absolutely necessary to be done in the house, then read a little, then laid tea long before the time. (Almost every Sunday some one came to tea.) Lastly, with folded hands, she chattered for her husband's return; real yearning for his presence possessed her. At tea, if strangers were present, the pair called each other Mrs. and Mr. Smith.

The Sunday evening was a notable weekly event with them; it offered so much strictly ordered variety. In their religious world, by a rough delimitation, the morning is applied to worship, the afternoon to the instruction of children, while the evening is a forlorn crumb for the need of the whole world outside the particular sect. (Sometimes a week-day evening is given up to projects of enlightenment of Parsees, Tierra del Fuegians, Buddhist monks—heathens generally.) But that crumb, the Sunday evening service, gritty enough to the damned, is sweet in the tooth of the judges. In the morning man speaks to God; in the evening God, richly commented, to express it cautiously, speaks to man.

The smith's wife adored the Sunday evening service, partly from habit and training, partly in a childlike way; for it was narrative, anecdotal, variable. In addition it meant the occasional company of her husband. Every third Sunday evening he was free, and the two went together where they liked; on one of the two intervening Sundays they went to the husband's chapel and came back together, almost always much edified, in a mechanical way, by the warnings to the wicked which they had heard.

On a certain Sunday when the wife, in the order of things, was spending the evening alone, her husband said to her suddenly, not as usual, 'Where are you going this evening?' but :

'Why don't you go to . . .'

'Newbury Park?' A voice inside her finished the sentence. It was very distinct, and, strangely, the reverberation seemed to come from her chest rather than from her head. The husband's question was :

'Why don't you go to Winter Street?' They called all the chapels by familiar names, like 'the iron chapel,' or by the name of a street.

'I was thinking of going to Newbury Park.'

'It is so far,' he persisted; 'why don't you go to Winter Street? Captain Stocker (an inspired engineer officer with no chin) is going to preach. You like him . . .'

'I am inclined to go to Newbury Park.' He did not answer, and she repeated :

'I want to go to Newbury Park.' She was ashamed to explain her choice more narrowly.

'Oh, very well.' They could get no nearer to a quarrel on such a subject, and to Newbury Park she went.

Not at all easy in her mind though. It was a dismal night, and the distance was so great. And then to have had words with her husband on a Sunday evening. Fatigued, and almost tearful, she came into the hot room she thought of as Newbury Park. Preliminaries of consecration of the proceedings past, the speaker, standing behind a little rostrum with his hands behind him, said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

She knew these words just as well as the 'Our Father' or 'There is a green hill.' . . . She had heard sermons, discourses, upon them beyond recollection. At another time she would have nodded the cadences of the phrase, her lips anticipating each word. Now the words loomed great and unfamiliar, as if memory or hearing were out of focus; in a darkness, the negation of a stunning light, which yet seemed near. She saw the speaker grasp the front of the rostrum with both hands, stretch his arms stiff; she heard him repeat :

'Our Lord speaks: Verily, verily; truth of truth, unanswerable absolute truth; He says, I say unto *you*.' He raised his right hand and dropped a threatening index, as a bravo might a revolver, straight at her. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

A ray fell from distant heaven. Alighting in her, it exploded her
soul

soul into radiant, conscious being. In an instant, before the speaker had punctuated the sentence, so to speak, herself and the visible and invisible world were created anew. The flood was overpowering; a thousand biblical reminiscences; the creation of the world, sacrifices, voices and fire from heaven, whole psalms with every word and letter distinct in idea, were present in a flash. She was afraid and consoled at once. With the desire to scream came the comfortable words: *I am here*. She had seen women swoon, have hysterics, in chapel. It had never happened to herself. There was no danger now; the body had no time to exclaim as it went down under the victory of spirit. Panorama veiled panorama with incredible rapidity, and side issues came and went too at the same time, scraps of conversation years and years ago, visions of streets, forgotten faces, trivial occasions and incidents; a great deduction emanating all the time, the life of our Lord in minute detail, from babyhood with all its incidents (of which she had no practical knowledge) to the terrors of Calvary. Not stopping here, for the new creature she was for the moment knew no fear or hesitation; she followed His being boldly from the lips of His wounded, tortured body to the ecstatic arms of His Father.

Such was the preliminary trial of the course she had now to run.

She began immediately to foot the glorious path. She began to pray; but her prayer had no words, no known aim; she prayed for things she had never heard of, and in a language she did not know. The light she threw round her gave visible objects an unaccustomed, alluring interest: a sin at the first step, which was followed instantly by forgiveness and reconciliation. The Light within her was the object, the object of objects.

The Light said, in words of music and light, 'He giveth His beloved sleep,' and a veil was drawn across the ecstasy.

When she reached home she had not the faintest excuse to make any confidence to her husband of what had taken place. Indeed, how could she possibly communicate it? She had no terms in which to express the new birth even to herself.

The Monday morning rose as pale as any other. There seemed no prospect of a return of the ecstasy. The repetition of the words which had induced it was unavailing. Only the universe was still rational to her, as in the moment of revelation; it stood no longer simply a fact, dull, uniform, unexplained; the living parts of it were very much alive, the dead not worth a thought. And the Lord of Life lived in her; she knew that; there could be no mistake about that.

She

She began to pray ; a long communion with the Light by faith ; for it was not evident. But now her prayer was in mortal phrases of human speech ; a tempestuous, chaotic prayer, though with no movement of the lips, no activity of the brain ; it throbbed, as before, from her chest. It was a long narrative, with supposed rejoinders, interruptions. It often repeated itself ; it was full of cross purposes. Some parts of it were in a lower tone, parts so low as to be next to silence ; at last, in a dead hush, the request escaped her : ' Speak to me.' Then a full swell ensued, gigantic soliloquy, in a small degree comparable to incidents of the great interview, a half memory that, in the mystic prayer, the soul to soul speech, a desperate entreaty had been made ; that she might know the bliss of faith, never again receive revelation or smallest encouragement ; that she might live like Him, die like Him, forsaken by Him, with no sight of His face, no sound of His voice. Had He put in her heart a prayer so exalted ? She knew, with angelic perception, how great this prayer was. She framed such a prayer instantly ; she knew that He looked for courage in her : ' Try me, test me, give me suffering, neglect me ; give me grace to love in absence, for present, how could I do else ?'

She shook through all her body like some one awakened from sleep, saw the visible objects of the kitchen, the work which engaged her hands ; she found, with a light surprise, that she had been busy all the time.

The dinner was excellent. The smith almost overstayed the twenty-five minutes he had ; his wife was so cheerful, so smiling, so clean personally. He took for granted, as well he might, that this was a favourable combination of ordinary circumstances. Not at all ; it was an ordinary aspect of a new order of things. Those who know even a little of heaven usually know a great deal about earth ; and here was no exception. To see the world with washed eyes, everyday matters and objects, to distinguish their classes, means to handle the matter which concerns one with dignity and discretion.

This woman had been, let us say, from the point of view of a high standard, fairly cheerful, demure, restful to the working man, who was nearly always tired when he saw her. But why should duty to a husband in this sense depend upon accidents of nature and circumstances ? She put and answered this question. Also in the preparation of food and the cleansing of crockery and accessories. *Intention* can add something to perfect mechanical execution. An utensil cleansed in the highest name must be abundantly clean, lavishly brilliant. To

scour

scour potatoes as though they were all alike and little different from other roots, to leave them in hot water so long, steam them so long, and then fling them at the eater; slaves for slaves might act thus. Coming to conclusions such as these under the image of incensing the Divine, who Himself swung the censer, an unlearned woman, who had handled very few books in her life, was primed to confound many a doctor.

For something more than two weeks a state of being showed little variation from one day to another. Exalted faith in the Divine Presence hourly renewed, either at the occasion of reconciliation after slips, neglects, moments in which something stood before the Light; or by simple, formal pact. She agreed to ask nothing but at the Divine dictation, to expect nothing, not to be inquisitive or impatient; above all, to keep the union a secret, to hold infinite stability as jealously as though it were a bubble. So, while every day changed from point to point like the colours of an opal, an infinity of differently coloured sparks, though storm and hush succeeded, contrition and ecstasy, before his very eyes, the smith saw not the weakest ripple in his wife's placid and perfect demeanour.

To return a moment to her everyday conduct of life, she was scrupulous to dress, to keep herself, as the warden of an idea, as the shell in which it lay active and sleepless, hidden.

One morning the interminable conversation had dropped to an even mildness; the answers to her whispered confidences seemed to grow faint—almost inaudible. An alarm came upon her, and under the strange condition, in the language she did not know. It would not be beaten away. Calm retreated into the depths of a distance such as she had never before beheld, and a rough voice bellowed through all the vacuum:

'Halt!' She held her breath, firm amidst immensity of loneliness unknown to sand, or sea, or sky.

'Doubt!' added the voice, with long-drawn insistence; and a hail of questions rushed vertical upon her, driving her down, down. What was she? whence? who? where were her titles? The Light she housed, what was it? it? it? Why *it*? What was its form? Was it a person? What person? Did it really speak? Did it speak truth? Descent must be arrested before she could answer, but that was impossible, till faith spread arms beneath her, and in seas of down and spice, in a world of light fluttering into song hushed at the moment of utterance, all her being melted into those conditions, and the familiar voice said with unfamiliar tenderness, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His.'

'No,

'No, no,' she cried, 'I am afraid.' The sound of her voice brought her within the narrow walls of the kitchen with a jar. She sat down and wept for a long time without thought.

The paroxysm coincided with the smith's return to dinner. His wife stared at the clock until her face was as candid as its own, and the key sounded in the latch. She had a severe cold at this time, hence her husband took little heed of her swollen appearance. He, for his part, was sullen, unsympathetic. The perfection of material surroundings had begun to prey upon him. His ideal of life was of a balance of give and take; he knew so well in his work how a good job foreshadows a bad; and while he relished new comfort, he already smarted under a deprivation. Ah, man, man; the lentils of captivity were sweet in his memory at the table of joy!

He finished his dinner and went away, but the darkness of his presence remained behind, filling all the part of the house through which he had passed. She cleared the meal. The platters returned noiselessly to the dresser, brighter than they had left it. 'Give me sorrow,' she prayed; 'give me desertion, longing. Ah, I have longing; I long, I long.' She went to the bedroom, dressed herself, came down, and went out. She took no note of the direction: the invisible Guide had all the care of that. Her way lay across the adjoining heath; then by a turn she retraced her steps. Her eye rested here and there on scrub and struggling growth, always in the name with which every leaf was signed. It came into her fancy that she would like to see the sea which He had made. Instantly, like a child to be humoured, she saw the great expanse of the water with noble vision, shoreward and seaward at once, and the delicate contact of its rim with the fringe of the sky. Then, changing a little, the horizon was more distant; it seemed the same sea, but there was so much more of it; it was the face of waters clinging to the confines of a larger planet. The stars too, for these appeared, fell into unusual patterns. Occupied with the vision, she gradually descended into the town. She went on, absorbed in her prayer, crestfallen and timid, delighted to take a low place before Him; when she turned her head, as though she had heard her name, and saw in a stationer's window the words emblazoned: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' The sight of the words certainly awoke a profusion of memories; not so many but that she noted clearly the position of the card, the manner in which it was entrenched among piles of book backs. The card reminded her that she wished to buy something of the linendraper a few shops on. It is
difficult

difficult to see how it should have reminded her, unless it was the denial of the wish to buy this card. How can you hang up your birth? or whilst you live in it, why should you write up in your room the information that you were once born?

For some time communion, though tender, delicious, uninterrupted, took place on a lower level. It was the expression on her part of deep contrition; ever a new wound meekly, weakly, presented for healing. With the consciousness that the subject was less exalted than sometimes, there was no notion in her mind of comparison, for deepest anguish was ecstasy beyond thought. The very vagueness of her attitude was soothing, a reward, delight that she was permitted to know the divine union by faith. On a certain night she dreamed (it is fit to state that she never dreamed of the Divine Lover, and little at any time). She dreamed that she arrived in a square in a large town. A garden was in the midst of it, and it was inclosed by large, gaudy buildings lighted up, though it was day. She made her way to one corner of the square where there was a book shop, over which was a poem written in gold letters. The poem had eight lines; four which rhymed correctly, and in continuation four others, not rhymed, which seemed to dwindle away. In her dream this had a deep meaning, but she only retained the concluding words:

. . . it was a wondrous thing

To be so loved.

In the window of the shop was the card she had seen in the stationer's window, bearing the words, 'Except a man' . . . at least so she took for granted, for she did not distinguish them. Turning round she saw that the square had an Oriental aspect; then the dream became stupid, then unpleasant; a pungent smell pervaded it. She woke suddenly to the fact that it was tobacco; she heard the soft click of the street door. Running over the circumstances of the vivid dream, she had the staunchness to reject it as of no consequence. She looked upon the time it took to examine it as time wasted, and turned joyfully to address Him who never sleeps. It was He who began:

'If I should not be who you think I am, would you love Me?'

'That I would,' she answered fervently and without hesitation.

'And if you make a mistake, and were to be damned?'

'I should still be grateful.'

'You do not know.'

'You have given me knowledge above all knowledge.' And the silent utterance of her soul grew voluble, universal, a torrent of reckless thanks

thanks and prayer. Thanks for what she had never possessed, prayers for what she already enjoyed. She offered thanks for her existence, that she was her very self, that she was a *woman*. The Lord had been born of a *woman*. She could understand a little what it must have been to be the holy mother of God. This notion was very new to her, quite new; but that caused her no surprise, for everything was new.

There was a peculiar bliss in the thought. She came to it again and again. When she had pursued it to the end of one set of considerations it returned afresh and afresh. The morning passed with astounding rapidity—the contrary phenomenon was commoner—but nothing was belated. The dinner was as punctually served to the minute as though she had watched the clock anxiously all the time.

The habit of divine communication had long since become continual. She was able to maintain it through the most complicated demands upon her attention. Her ordinary life presented few alterations to view, her ordinary manner, her ordinary appearance. A greater solicitude might have been noted. Her clothing was really very different from what it had been, but the changes were so dexterous as to be scarcely perceptible. It cannot be denied, too, that as soon as the traces of dinner had been removed she hastened to put on the best clothes she allowed herself to wear on a weekday.

It had become necessary that she should go to a London shop, one of those warehouses where everything is to be bought. This periodical visit was always made in the same way. She hurried off immediately after dinner. From Charing Cross, which she reached by rail, she walked across Charing Cross Road and Leicester Square to Piccadilly Circus, whence she took an omnibus to her destination. Her shopping over, she came back by a different omnibus to the railway station. On the present occasion she laughed to recognise in Leicester Square the scene of her dream, in the Alhambra Theatre the Oriental colouring of it. Sure enough, too, in the north-west corner of it, was the book-shop, but the name of the proprietor stood where the poem had been cramped in her dream. In the window, by a coincidence, a white card was visible in exactly the position which the text had occupied. Rejection of the dream gave way to this extent, that she crossed the road to find out what it was. The back and side of a book were exposed, and before it was a written label: '*Just published: The Excellent Way,*' and some further particulars. She wanted the book, though the idea was preposterous; she had never in her life paid even two shillings for a book; this one surely cost more. There was no time for dallying; her errand pressed.

§ THE INVISIBLE PRINCESS
an illustration to the story on page 64
by
Laurence Housman



pressed. She went into the shop, and the book lay dazzling on the dark counter before her. The shopman, amused at her shyness, her unwillingness to touch it, exposed the back, the sides, opened at the title-page. She saw there was a picture. The desire to possess the book grew. The shopman dropped the leaves casually through his fingers. She saw the words: 'Lord, if thou art not present.' . . . 'Ten-and-six,' said the man; 'it is beautifully printed, beautifully got up.' She thought that did not prove much, but she repeated with alarm: 'Ten-and-six!' The leaves splashed over each other. Seeing again the words she had seen before, she hurriedly closed, gave gold and silver for brown paper, string, and a possibility. In the omnibus she opened the parcel and peeped into the book.

Popery! and she wrapped it up again as well as she could.

At the store, in the tea-room where she went, according to her custom, to get breath and take a little refreshment, she could not resist taking another look at the book she carried. This time she patiently sought out the poem which had first arrested her eye.

Lord, if thou art not present, where shall I
Seek thee the absent . . .

It was very disheartening; it did not speak to her at all. She could not find words in which to reproach herself with her folly. After a few moments of such reflection, ill at ease with her conclusion, she took yet another dip and alighted on a page where a sonnet began:

Before myself I tremble, all my members quake
When lips and nose I mark, and both the hollow caves . . .

It was hopeless; she shut the book resolutely with the sudden determination to return it. With this intention she took her departure and hurried to the book-shop, which, when she reached it, was closed.

The train had little comfort for her. Only when she was some few minutes on the road did she remember that the loved communion had been interrupted just as long as this unfortunate book had been in her possession. She hastened to repair the deprivation; and though her wish did not remain entirely without response, the book beside her was a drag by its presence. She had thoughts at one moment of throwing it out of the window.

Reaching home, the book had to be smuggled into the house. The difficulty of this accomplishment, not to mention the danger, was something very like a blow to the poor owner. There was no possible question as to whether her husband could be let see it or not; accordingly it was necessary to enter the house quickly and noiselessly, to deposit the book nimbly upon one of the dark stairs while she went
into

into the sitting-room to give an account of her journey and soothe the anger of the smith, which she could count upon—anger at her forced absence, though it was surely as much upon his account as upon her own; then she must snatch the packet dexterously as she went up to take off her coat and bonnet, and hide it effectually before she could be followed. It had to be done and she did it. She was very weak next morning through lying awake devouring her tears.

To allay the agony of her doubt, the difficulty of return to the divine communion, her first determination was to put the book out of sight and leave it there. This turned out so little satisfactory as a salve that she changed tactic, and, withdrawing it from its lurking-place, she cut the leaves and began to read it straight through, disregarding the shocks to her accustomed beliefs which occurred ten times on every page. Her determination was so strong still when she had penetrated a few pages that she found herself spelling out the name of she did not know whom: Blessed Jacopone da Todi, not skipping this, to her, unnecessary preliminary to the perusal of the poem following it, which answered her unconscious glance with better promise than any of the preceding had vouchsafed. Ah! dear Lord, Light in dark places indeed. The first line she read set all her doubts at rest. Joy filled all her being, she did not know why; but such was the perfection of joy to her, when she could not trace it to any earthly origin. She could not have declared that she understood fifty per cent. of the words under her eye, but she was sure in the awakened part of her that here was something for her. What did she care now about the origin of the book, for what petty or even wicked purpose it might have been put together? She knew enough to be certain that He uses all things, all means, for His good pleasure. Until she could look into His face, follow with her own eyes the moving lines of His lips as they move in speech, she must be content to hear His voice where it is to be heard.

O Love, all love above!

Why hast thou struck me so?

All my heart broke atwo,

Consumed with flames of love,

Burning and flaming cannot find solace;

It cannot fly from torment, being bound;

Like wax amid live coal it melts apace.

It languishes alive, no help being found.

And so forth. The words had no special reference to her own condition at the time, probably none at all; yet such was the force of this unlooked-for revelation, she knew once for all and at the first glance
that

that these words were meant for her. Even had she been told that Blessed Jacopone was a minor brother, and had she been told at the same time what a minor brother was, it would have made no difference to her. From the afternoon when she was made free of the ancient Italian poem, the father of so much of the best that has followed it, she gave it her attention until she knew it all by heart, and could again put away the book containing it, for she cut no more pages.

With no more power to define a symbol than a baby, she knew very well from the outset, and practically, that all visible nature, and more especially the Word of God (that is the Bible) are intelligible only in the manner of symbol; that all appearances, all divine utterances, portray something beyond, which in turn is the emblem of some remoter truth—reality. She was fully convinced that the various recorded and unrecorded acts of Christ, the incidents of the life He passed on earth, are continually re-enacted for the furtherance of His kingdom, and the nourishment of the souls of His. This belief, perhaps it is proper to add, was held only on the authority of Christ; it had no further support. She knew that the way of illumination has either to be trod without fear or left alone. There must be courage to meet and face Apollyon, but how much more courage does it need to listen to the voice of the Beloved!

Let it then be stated categorically (where the smith's wife had been convinced in one point of time) that she had not shunned a conclusion which had been forced upon her: Christ had once been born of woman miraculously; that momentous event had had its direct value, the physical redemption of man and fallen nature; but beyond this was there not something else? It is a matter of vulgar knowledge that the great sacrifice is infinitely more far-reaching in its effect. As our Lord then was born of His mortal mother in mortal flesh, so is He conceived mystically in every one of His chosen, and born spiritually, but not less truly. The act too is reciprocal, and the ramifications of the mystery extend no doubt till limitless space is filled with the glory of God.

On an afternoon, at the accustomed hour, the smith reached his house, and hearing no sound to indicate the presence of his wife within doors, walked into the sitting-room to verify her absence. She was sitting in the usual chair, with her head bowed and her hands crossed in a strange attitude upon her breast. He asked her what she was doing, but all the answer he received was a deprecating wave of her hand. He placed himself before her, intercepting the light of the window, and there stood stock still. Presently she lifted her hands
with

with the palms towards him, and then stooped the whole upper part of her frame until her forehead almost touched her knees. Raising her face then, her lips, which were very white, moved rapidly without sound, presently breaking into cadences :

Against me let no blame henceforth be held

If such a love confoundeth all my wit . . .

She brushed her hands across her eyes, shook her head, and smiled recognition to her husband.

The following day their doctor called in the afternoon, quite accidentally. He explained his visit as accident, adding some professional jest. He stayed almost an hour, and then, a strange request, asked for some tea. The smith's wife, quietly flattered, prepared a cup of tea, and they resumed their conversation. The doctor snatched greedily at any seeming opportunity of talking upon religious subjects ; but she would not be enticed, and at length he went away. When the smith returned, his wife told him of the visit ; he affected surprise, though he had just seen the doctor, and heard from him the following opinion on the health of his wife : ' Take care of your wife, you will not have her much longer ; I cannot discover anything wrong with her ! '

There was a great peace over life for a day or two, a rest from ecstasy as sweet or sweeter. Then, sweeter yet, suddenly the renewal, the ' light without pause or bound,' of the poem. To light the world from one's own body, to bear the Light within one, to be the genetrix—it surpassed reason.

Not iron nor the fire can separate

Or sunder those whom love doth so unite ;

Not suffering nor death can reach the state

To which my soul is ravished ; from its height

Beneath it, lo ! it sees all things create ;

It dominates the range of dimmest sight . . .

She gave way completely to the fact. The conviction that she truly bore within her her august Familiar was so profound that she grew to the pain of regret that the course of nature must obtain, and that, the day and hour accomplished, she must part with the mystical burden and enter into a new relationship. So jealous did she become that a notion one would think she could not escape did not enter her thought ; that, namely, of comparing her legal husband to Saint Joseph. The truth is that her grasp of the existing situation was on a very high level of mystery. As to her part in it, she held it almost as a person without sex, the necessary condition of her entering it once overpast.

Transformed in Him, almost the very Christ ;

One with her God, she is almost divine ;

Riches above all riches to be priced,
 All that is Christ's is hers, and she is queen.
 How can I still be sad, despair-enticed,
 Or ask for medicine to cure my spleen?
 The fetid sweet from sin,
 With sweetness overspread,
 The old forgot and dead
 In the new reign of Love.

The tone of complaint in the poem of Jacopone, though it had no meaning in her experience, did not raise the smallest question in her. She knew the treasure of sense within the terms employed. The joy was so intense that it seemed to her quite natural that another should express it, or try to express it, in the language of pain and dismay. In her prayers she was just as likely to pour out volumes of expostulation and injury, frantic and unseemly tenderness, sheer incoherency. In one passage the poem runs :

Thou canst not shield Thyself from love, love brought
 Thee captive by the road from heaven to earth ;
 Love brought Thee down to lowness, to be naught,
 To roam rejected from Thy humble birth.
 No house nor field enhanced Thy lowly lot ;
 Poor, Thou hast given riches and great worth.
 In life, in death, no dearth
 Of love hast Thou declared ;
 Thy heart hath flamed and flared
 With nothing else but love.

This was strong food, and it was devoured greedily. The aliment must be nothing but love :

'Thou wast not flesh,' Jacopone makes Saint Francis break out at the Divine Lover in the passion of his rebuke :

Thou wast not flesh, but love, in frame and brain ;
 Love made Thee man to bear our sins reward.
 Thy love required the cross, the world's disdain. . . .

All through, the phrases of the great Italian song filled her with terrible bliss, ecstatic terror. When an anxiety did not of itself come into her mind, the poem readily suggested it. Her own temper would have been most likely to have sucked the present sweetness, but the untractable companion of Saint Francis would not have it thus. He is full of apprehension. If this little love which, now, at the outset, is vouchsafed to me, so fills all my being, taxes all my strength, how shall I possibly endure the distention when it grows great, as grow it must? The smith's wife saw the force of this question in a manner outside Jacopone's anticipation.

Disregarding

Disregarding dates, hours, lapses of time (she gave little heed ; the Lover dictated season to her and time of day ; it was day or night for her at His bidding, spring or autumn), the time was nigh for the mysterious birth. It rushed upon her suddenly ; there seemed only a few minutes given her in which to prepare the setting of the astounding miracle. The historical circumstances were present to her in a flash, she knew not whence ; but the whole incident, the actual details, had to be animated. She moved about quietly under the sorest stress she had ever known, while the agitated soul of her seemed to be traversing space in all directions in the fervour of the moment ; she was muttering to herself over and over again :

In such a deadly swoond,
Alas ! where am I brought ?

Johann Scheffler has shown the nativity in sentences of tenderness which human speech has poor hope ever to excel, so frail that they cannot be stirred from the tongue in which they were first set ; Friedrich Spe has expressed physical contact with Christ in words which swoon upon his lips ; the English language holds the pomp and glory of song in Crashaw's poem on the circumcision. If these three masters could be distilled into one and their concentrated sweetness impinged direct upon a sensitive heart, the victim might present a parallel to the overwhelmed blacksmith's wife, fallen the most pitiable heap of flesh. The lamentable workman, the words of the doctor fresh in his brain (they had gnawed through into every fibre of it) lifted his wife in his grimed arms ; lifted her, a strange contradiction of terms, into depths. It cannot be told from what vision he aroused her.

It was frightening to a poor man like the blacksmith to see his wife consent to be put to bed without a murmur of protest. Even had she been evidently suffering he would have expected her to deny that anything was the matter with her, and certainly to refuse to go to bed. To every inquiry she returned the same blissful 'smile, of such candid reassurance that those about her could not believe that she suffered. The news of the mysterious ailment (which was to end in death) ran down the street, and unaccustomed women gathered at the clean bedside, and there remained.

She now lived in the heights. She had now, as she thought, transcended all ; it had been a long fight to break with such clearly justifiable habit as that which kept her the slave of the calls of her house. But love, great love had made wreck of all ; love, tyrannical, had broken down the flesh, even in its purest strongholds :

I have no longer eyes for forms of creatures,
 I cry to Him Who doth alone endure ;
 Though earth and heaven exhaust their varied natures,
 Through love their forms are thin and nowise sure ;
 When I had looked upon His splendid features,
 Light of the sun itself was grown obscure.
 Cherubim, rare and pure
 By knowledge and high thought,
 The seraphin, are naught
 To him who looks on love.

She no longer waked and slept ; night and day alike passed in calm ecstasy. The Beloved could not leave her any more. Seen by none of the busybodies at her bedside, she held at will and laid aside within easy reach the divine Presence come to her with the loving confidence He had Himself taught her. Locality had ceased to have that vital importance which it once had ; great sense of her individuality remained, and stronger still was the personality of the divine Lover. She knew (for ecstasy brought with it supreme knowledge) that her body lay in sheets, supposed to be lingering and ailing ; that it was given over to the care of hands she knew, to which she gave no heed. She knew that her kitchen stood untended by its proper guardian ; but love was grown terrible now, she dared not deny it lest it should crush the universe in despite. The officious woman in the room would bend her ear to the smiling lips when they moved, to hear, low and sweet and distinct :

Love, Love, how Thou hast dealt a bitter wound !
 I cry for nothing now but love alone.
 Love, Love, to Thee I am securely bound ;
 I can embrace none other than my own.
 Love, Love, so strongly hast Thou wrapt me round,
 My heart by love for ever overthrown,
 For love I am full prone.
 Love, but to be with Thee !
 O Love, in mercy be
 My death, my death of love !

‘She is raving!’ But no change of expression answered the opinion, though it was distinctly heard and understood.

On a given day the number of people passing to and fro began to increase. The fire was kept more brisk. There was noiseless hurry going on. She knew quite well that they were preparing for her death. An extra pillow was put behind her, and not half-an-hour elapsed before another was added. Then one beckoned another outside the room, and she supposed that the smith had been sent for.

Not long afterwards, in fact, he arrived. As he came into the room her lips began to move again.

‘She is raving!’ the leading attendant volunteered, not for the first time that morning. Though the smith had not heard it before, he rejected the hypothesis with a gesture of disdain. The fact was, that the dignity of his wife’s appearance filled him with vanity. Not those, he thought of the women who stood round like birds of prey, none of those is my wife, but the serene woman propped up with pillows, who is already half in heaven, on whom I shall set my eyes only once or twice more. He bent to her face, and heard here and there as a syllable was accented :

To Love for ever wed,
Love hath united both
Our hearts in perfect troth
Of everlasting love.

‘Her head is as clear as mine,’ he said scornfully ; ‘she’s no more raving than you are.’

‘What’s she say?’ asked the woman, awed.

‘I can’t say it like her.’

‘She’s going.’

‘Lower her head,’ whispered one. The smith looked savage, as though he would defend her from molestation with violence. The women continued to mutter what ought to be done.

She motioned to raise her hands ; the smith took one of them ; her lips moved :

Love, Love, O Jesus, I have reached the port ;
Love, Love, O Jesus, whither . . .

JOHN GRAY.

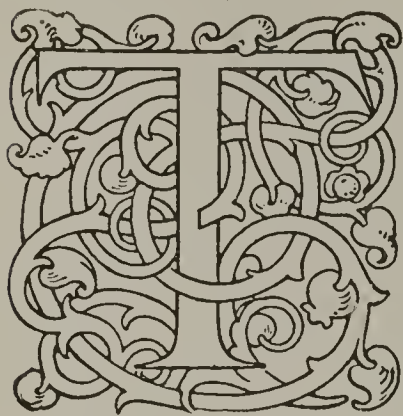
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CAMPAGNOLA
F



THE CAPTIVE
STAG
by
Giulio Campagnola

GIULIO CAMPAGNOLA

'Vix tertium ingressus lustrum ingenio et natura non est Lippo (another youth of the writer's acquaintance) absimilis: quin praeter litteras tum latinas tum graecas impuber iste et lyram tractare et in ea canere, versus edere, et,—quod caecus non potest,—scribere, pingere, statuas atque signa fingere, sic per se magis ut puto duce natura quam arte perdidicit, ut temporibus nostris omnibus illi tantis in rebus simul possit meo iudicio conferri nemo.'—(Letter of Matteo Bosso to Girolamo, the father of Giulio, about 1494.)



THE fond admiration of his seniors paints for us, in a few letters and verses, the figure of Giulio Campagnola's prodigious youth. At eleven or twelve a scholar, a musician, a singer, a poet, a painter, a sculptor in the round and in relief; at thirteen not only conversing freely in Latin and Greek, but reading Hebrew 'as if he had sucked its principles with his mother's milk'; able to reproduce exactly the works of the most famous painters and to equal their creations 'if he liked to take the pains'; skilled in making portraits 'so like that you could always recognise them,' he seemed to those friends securely chartered for illimitable fame, a wonder of inspiration and untaught genius. We can see that, far from being this child of solitary nature or miraculous grace, he really grew up in a hot-bed of culture. His father, an official of the Venetian rule in the city of Padua, was a scholar and dilettante in his tastes, delighting in Ciceronian correspondence with his friends; author also of a translation of the Psalms, of a tract on the Jews, of a volume in Praise of Virginity, and other excursions of learned curiosity. He was, moreover, the student, under Squarcione, of art inspired by a recovered antiquity, and dedicated to a collector friend a description, now lost, of certain works of art then to be seen in Padua.

In such a house a child of quick faculties would slip into an accomplishment in the arts as readily as in other surroundings a boy becomes a cricketer or a shot. If speech were an art practised only here and there, all children who could chatter would be prodigies. The arts of painting and music were themselves in the vigour of their spring, and must have swept many a boy into their train—mere playfellows of that contagious youth. It is clear that Giulio became at least an accomplished mimic in painting. Of original work we have no trace, the two miniatures on kid, described by the Anonimo of Morelli, being after drawings

drawings by Giorgione¹ and Diana. The same authority attributes to him a pupil in painting, Domenico Veneziano by name, who also figures as a copyist in that Paduan catalogue. It has been conjectured that this Domenico was the well-known Domenico Campagnola, possibly a son, brother, or other relative of Giulio; that some relation beyond the name united them is certain, since two plates exist in which one and the other had a hand. Domenico's drawings and engravings, wrought in free undulating lines, differ much in style from Giulio's, but the inspiration of his art has a common source with that of his namesake.

It is as an engraver that Giulio Campagnola survives. His signature on a few prints has secured his identity and made him dear to the collector as the developer of an unusual stipple-technique. It is within these technical limits that his invention would seem chiefly to have worked; designs he was ready to adopt from Mantegna, Dürer, John Bellini; it amused him to refit figures taken from one, with a landscape from another, or *vice versa*, but he was the virtuoso and curious craftsman whether making miniatures on kid or breaking up the burin line into dots. Variations in technique, however, have their significance, and this tentative of stipple is the response of engraving in sensitive hands to the impulse of a new kind of painting. The Tuscan art of line was the very stuff for the severe burin of a Marcantonio; the painting of Giorgione, with its tenderly fused and rounded forms, its lustre and shadow, called on the graver for a new language if its essential beauty was to be preserved. A more adequate answer to the problem was the mezzotint technique, invented much later; stipple engraving is but a bastard form, which became none the better for being systematised. But these first gropings for a new method with the old tools in the work of Giulio Campagnola have no little charm. The question of absolute originality is of small importance. Dotted work with a punch and hammer was a device of the engravers of metal work. In the work of several contemporaries or predecessors of Giulio there is an occasional use of the dot; Dürer has recourse to it here and there, as when he grains the block of stone in his *Melencolia* by dabbing with the burin point; but Giulio so used the procedure as to subordinate the line, cover it up, or replace it, so that the main effect is one of stipple. The plate of the *Flute-Player*, reproduced here, shows a preparation in line finished in stipple; parts of other plates are worked in stipple only.

Consideration of these plates proves our artist no first-rate draughtsman;

¹ The engraving of a nude woman by Campagnola may be this same design.

man ; he is safest with the more easily conventionalised forms, such as the weedy acanthoid growth of his foliage. This has a pretty effect in the semi-heraldic stag chained to a tree ; in a companion piece of a grazing stag there is an odd mixture of more natural and more arbitrary shapes. Stipple doubtless pleased him for this reason as well as for others, that he could fumble for his drawing and leave it vaguer.

If it is interesting to see engraving arrested and groping before the new character in painting that we associate with the name of Giorgione, the chief interest after all in these plates lies in what they echo of the master's imagination. Any fragments overheard from that poet must be welcome, even were the eavesdropper much less capable than Giulio. The *Flute-Player* and the *Woman at the Well*, to name two, seem to bear the authentic stamp. Not alone the greater truth of aspect in his painting struck Giorgione's contemporaries ; they were captured or repelled by his conception of the image, his dealings with the subject of painting. The shock of this is measured by the puzzled vexation of Vasari before the frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Naturalistic rendering or ingenious solutions of problems like that of painting all sides of a body at once he could appreciate, but over the subjects of the new painting he shook his head like any ordinary modern painter or critic in like case. 'Giorgione,' he says, 'set hand to the work accordingly, but thought only of executing fanciful subjects, calculated for the display of his knowledge in art, and wherein there is of a truth neither arrangement of events in consecutive order nor even single representations depicting the history of known or distinguished persons, whether ancient or modern. I, for my part, have never been able to understand what they mean, nor, with all the inquiries that I have made, could I find any one who did understand or could explain them to me. Here is a man, there a woman, in different attitudes ; one has the head of a lion beside him, near another is an angel, but which rather resembles a cupid, so that one cannot divine what it all means.' Cut adrift from the histories of eminent persons, he can find no significance in the anonymous attitudes of here a man, there a woman, or in the angel which rather resembles a cupid. Nor, perhaps, will it ever become common property of thought that the language of painting, possessing, as it does, no verb, is badly handicapped for narrative statement ; possessing no conjunction save 'and,' is ill fitted for logical statement. With some strain of its resources, the art may suggest Eve and Adam instead of Adam and Eve ; but thus to present the objects conjoined in



THE WOMAN
OF SAMARIA
by
Giulio
Campagnola

one strict order does not come natural to it, and so simple an opposition of thought as 'Black *but* comely' is beyond its scope. 'Black' it can give, and the features summed up in the judgment 'comely'—that is all. What the mind can take and make of the sheer presence and expression to the eye of silent, immobile things is the characteristic field of painting, and to make a merit of this still conjunction, so that vision feeds and broods upon it in a speculation, independent of story or argument, is the franchise and triumph of the art.

Strung to a high pitch of this picture reverie, Giorgione peopled his canvas with images of youth, of love-making, of music-making in a golden air and a holiday world. Mr. Pater wrote his admirable essay on the painter to the curious text that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.' It is easy to see from his examples what he meant by the formula, but the language is misleading. The complete analogue of music exists in the arts of design when form and colour are combined in arbitrary decoration. Painting differs from these by employing images, and must aspire to a musical condition at their expense. Now, there are certainly draughtsmen, the forms of whose images do dissolve into caligraphic lines like a reflection carried away and twisted in running water; there are painters in whose carpet of colour the image has little significance beyond a station and a shape. But Giorgione is not one of these. If he shakes free of 'events in consecutive order' and 'the history of known or distinguished persons,' it is that he may come at the figures dear to himself. They and their setting are chosen with intense purpose and liking, and all the decorative parts of painting are employed to recommend them to our delight. Himself a musician when Venice was mad for music, and her fiddlers, says Dürer, wept to hear themselves play, he paints the piper and the lutanist. Beside them he paints all of the naked beauty of women that he could compass in a romance of Arcadian woodland. 'Here there is a man, there a woman, in different attitudes,' the dream of an angel who rather resembles a cupid.

But if Giorgione lifted painting from the stress of definite story, conscious of its quiet and profound appeal independent of that interest, he none the less profited by the accumulated signs and traditions of the art to stimulate and guide the fancy. It is his secret that those pleasure-parties retain something of a hieratic composure, each figure rapt into a dream and absence, as if remembering that once it was a martyr or a saint. The effect is that of hearing church music carried through the doors to the river-side, or of the solemn hymn melodies that first served for dancing.



THE FLUTE-
PLAYER
by
Giulio
Campagnola

dancing. And if we are to give to Giulio Campagnola a part in the invention of these pieces, it is perhaps certain witty afterthoughts of combination, more pointed still, that we owe to him. We find a liking in his work for the epigram of a death's-head, or, as in the plate given here, an old man slipped in at the feet of piping youth. In a version by another engraver the old man does not appear. And we might suppose his the daring scene-shifting by which the pipers are banished from the well side, and the Woman, lingering, is confronted by another figure.¹ The figure intended is poorly acted by this mincing person, a fact which goes to heighten the probability that he is an intruder ; but it was an apt trick of fancy playing upon the Giorgionesque Woman at the Well that turned her back into religious history and hit on the most credible part for her to play. The Prophet has put to flight the piper, and comes to probe and trouble that easy Samaritan mind. If the figure of the Woman be Giulio's own, we have done scant justice here to an artist capable of great conceptions.

D. S. MACCOLL.

§ NOTE.—For a full list and description of the plates ascribed to Giulio Campagnola, students may be referred to an article by Galichon in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1st series, vol. xiii. Galichon, adding considerably to the lists of Bartsch and Ottley, brings up the number to fourteen. To these may be added the *Grazing Stag* of the British Museum collection, which he does not catalogue. This collection, not counting copies and different states, contains eleven plates, among them the unique *Child with Cats*. Waagen states that there are drawings by Giulio at Chatsworth. There are many by Domenico, and several that may be Giulio's, catalogued under other names, Italian or Flemish. But without more knowledge of the man's style of drawing, it is impossible to identify these with any certainty. In the Museum of Rennes, however, there is a drawing of two dismounted cavaliers in a landscape, labelled 'Campagnole' by some collector, and very probably Giulio's. The delicate scratchy style differs altogether from Domenico's. In the same frame a drawing labelled 'Campagnole dit le vieux' is probably by Giulio after Mantegna. It should be possible, with a little study, to add examples from other collections. There is said to be one at Christ Church, Oxford.

¹ In the ordinary treatment of the scene, as in the story itself, the Woman finds the Saviour at the Well.

YAI AND THE MOON



THE Bay of Yedo is all blue and yellow. The village of Haokami is pink. And Umanosuké, who ruled the village worthily, was a widower. And Yai, his daughter, was wayward. The death of his wife had grieved Umanosuké. 'She was more dear to me,' he had cried over her tomb, 'than the plum-tree in my garden, more dear than the half of all my pied chrysanthemums. And now she is dead. The jewelled honeycomb is taken from me. Void is the pavilion of my desire. As an untrod island, as a little island in a sea of tears, so am I. My wife is dead. What is left to me?' Yai, not more than a baby, had sidled up to him, cooing, 'I, O father!' And the villagers had murmured in reverent unison, 'We, O sir!' And so the widower had straightway put from him his hempen weeds and all the thistles of his despair, had lifted his laughing child upon his shoulder, and touched with his hand the bowed heads of the villagers, saying, 'Bliss, of all things most wonderful, is fled from me. But Authority remains, and therefore will I make no more lamentation.' Henceforth Umanosuké lived for Authority. Full of wisdom were his precepts, and of necessity his decrees. Whenever the villagers quarrelled, as villagers will, among themselves, and struck each other with their paper-fans and parasols, at his coming they would lie flat upon the green ground, eager of his arbitration. With the villagers he had not any trouble. With Yai, alas! he had.

'Five years are gone,' he said sternly to her, one morning, 'since the sun glanced upon that sugared waterfall, your mother. Nor ever once have you sought to please me, since the day when you delivered yourself into my charge. The toys that I fashioned for your fingers you have not heeded, and from the little pictures that I painted for your pleasure you have idly turned your eyes. When I would awe you to obedience, you do but flout me. When I make myself even as a child and would be your playmate, you drive me from your presence. You will soon be eight years old. Behave, I beseech you, better!'

Yai ran into the garden, laughing.

On the morning of her thirteenth birthday, Umanosuké resumed his warning. 'Ten years ago,' he said, 'there flew from me that fair heron's wing that was your mother. I would she were here that she might
assuage

assuage the bitter sorrow you are always to me. You break the figured tablets from which I would teach you wisdom. Strewn with unfingered dust are the books you should have long learnt utterly. Your feet fly always over the sand or through the flowers and feather-grasses. I see you from my window bend your attentive ear to the vain music of the seashell. I often hear you in foolish parley with the birds. Me, your father, you do dishonour. Reflect! You are growing old. You will never see twelve again. Behave, I beseech you, better!'

Yai ran into the garden, pouting.

On the morning of the day before her wedding-day, Umanosuké called her to him and said, once and for all, 'Since faded and fell that fair treillage of convolvulus, than which I can find no better simile for your mother, it is already fifteen round years. And, lo! in nothing but dreams and errantry have you spent your girlhood. I, who begat you, have grown sad in contemplating all your faults. Had I not, knowing the wisdom of the philosophers, believed that in the span of every life there is good and evil equally distributed, and that your evil girlhood was surely the preamble of a most perfect prime, your faults had been intolerable. But I was comforted in my belief, and when I betrothed you to young Sanza, the son of Oiyâro, my heart was filled with fair hopes. Only illusions!'

'But, father,' said Yai, 'I do not love Sanza.'

'How can you tell that you do not love him,' her father demanded, 'seeing that you hardly know him?'

'He is ugly, father,' said Yai. 'He wears strange garments. His voice is harsh. Twice we have walked together by the side of the sea, and when he praised my beauty and talked of all he had learnt at the university, and of all he wished me to learn also, I knew that I did not love him. His thoughts are not like mine.'

'That may well be,' Umanosuké answered, 'seeing that *he* was held to be the finest student of his year, and *you* are a most ignorant maid. As for his face, it is topped with the highest forehead in Haokami. As for his garments, they are symbols of advancement. In fourteen languages he can lift his voice. I am an old man now, a man of the former fashion, and many of Sanza's thoughts seem strange to me, as to you. But when I am in his presence I bow humbly before his intellect. He is a marvellous young man, indeed. He understands all things. If you mean that *you* are unworthy of *him*, I certainly agree with you.'

'Then, it is that I am unworthy of him, father,' faltered Yai, with downcast eyes.

'Sanza

‘Sanza does not think so,’ said her father, more gently. ‘He told me, yesterday, that he thought you were quite worthy of him. And as I look at you, little daughter, and see how fair a maid you are, I think he was right. It is because I love you that I would you were without fault. I have never been able to rule you. It is therefore that I give you gladly to Sanza, who will understand you, as he understands all other things.’

‘Perhaps,’ said Yai, ‘Sanza is too wise to understand me, and I am not wise enough to love him. I do not know how it is—but, oh, father! indulge me in one whim, and I will never be graceless nor unfilial again! Tell Sanza you will not let him be my bridegroom!’

‘To-morrow you will be his wife,’ said Umanosuké. ‘That you think yourself indifferent to him, is nothing to me. You are betrothed to him. He has given to you, in due form, a robe of silken tissue, a robe incomparably brodered with moons and lilac. When once the lover has given to the maiden the robe of silken tissue, his betrothal is sacred in the eyes of our God.’

‘Father,’ said Yai, ‘the robe has been given to me indeed. It lies in my room, and over all its tissue are moons and lilac. But lilac is said to be the flower of unfaith, and moons are but images of him whom I love. Ever since I was little, I have loved the Moon. As a little child I loved him, and now my heart is not childish, but I love him still. From my window, father, I watch him as he rises in silver from the edge of the sea. I watch him as he climbs up the hollow sky. For love of him I forgo sleep, and when he sinks into the sea he leaves me desolate. Of no man but him can I be the bride.’

Umanosuké raised his hand. ‘The Moon,’ he said, ‘is the sacred lantern that our God has given us. We must not think of it but as of a lantern. I do not know the meaning of your thoughts. There is mischief in them and impiety. I pray you, put them from you, lest they fall as a curse upon your nuptials. I did but send for you that I might counsel you to bear yourself this afternoon, in Sanza’s presence, as a bride should, with deference and love, not with unmaidenly aversion. It is not well that the bridegroom, when he comes duly on the eve of his wedding to kiss the hand of his bride, and to sprinkle her chamber with rose-leaves, should be treated ungraciously and put to shame. Little daughter, I will not argue with you. Know only that this wedding is well devised for your happiness. If you love me but a little, try to please me with obedience. I am older than you, and I know more. Behave, I beseech you, better!’

Yai

Yai ran into the garden, weeping.

She paced up and down the long path of porcelain. She beat her hands against the bark of her father's favourite uce-tree, whose branches were always spangled with fandangles, and cursed the name of her bridegroom. For hours she wandered among the flower-beds, calling upon the name of her love.

The gardeners watched her furtively from their work, and murmured, smiling one to another, 'This evening we need not carry forth our water-jars, for Yai has watered all the flowers with her tears.'

When the hour came for her bridegroom's visit, though, Yai had bathed her eyes in orange-water, and sat waiting at her window. She saw him, a tiny puppet in the far distance, start from the pavilion that was his home. As he came nearer, she noted his brisk tread, and how the sun shone upon his European hat. What a complacent smile curved his lips! How foolish he looked, for all his learning! In one hand he swung a black umbrella, in the other a small parcel of brown paper. 'He will release me,' whispered Yai; but her heart misgave her, and she shrank away from the window.

When her nurse ushered Sanza into the room, Yai hardly turned her head.

'Well,' he said cheerily, as he placed his hat on the floor, 'here I am, you see! Quite punctual, I think? Brought my rose-leaves along with me. Really, my dear Yai,' he said, after a pause, 'I do think you might rise to meet me when I come into the room. You know I don't stickle for sentiment—far from it,—but surely, on such an occasion, a little display of affection wouldn't be amiss. Personally, you know, I object to all this rose-leaf business; but I'm not going to offend your father's religious views, and it's really rather a quaint old ceremony in its way; and I *do* think that you might—what shall I say?—meet me half-way.'

Yai came forward listlessly.

'You'll excuse the suggestion,' he laughed, shaking her hand. 'Now, I had better undo my parcel, I suppose? I expect you know more about these little Japanese customs than I do;' and he began to loosen the string.

'What have you in there?' asked Yai.

'Why, the rose-leaves, to be sure!' Sanza replied, producing a tin that had once held cocoa.

'Most lovers bring their rose-leaves in a bowl, I fancy,' said Yai,
with

90 YOUNG GIRLS BY THE SEA
by
P. Puvis de Chavannes



with a faint smile. 'But it is no matter. Please do not sprinkle them yet.'

'How stupid of me!' exclaimed Sanza, throwing back his handful of rose-leaves into the tin. 'If one does a thing at all, let it be done correctly. I have to kiss your hand first, of course.'

'Please do not kiss my hand, Sanza,' the girl said simply. 'I do not love you. I do not wish to be your bride.'

Sanza whistled.

'What about that silk material I sent you the other day?' he asked sharply. 'I understood that your failure to return it was *ipso facto* an acceptance of my proposal?'

'I kept the silken robe that was broidered with moons and lilac,' Yai murmured, 'because I wished to please my father, whom I have often grieved. I thought then that I could be your bride. Now I know that I cannot.'

'Why this change of front?' gasped her lover.

'I have no good reason,' she said, 'that I can give you; only that I thought I was stronger than I am—stronger than my love.'

'If you will excuse me,' muttered Sanza, with momentary irrelevance, 'I will sit down.' And he squatted upon the floor, disposing the tails of his frock-coat around him. 'May I ask,' he said at length, 'to what love you refer?'

'My love for the Moon,' Yai answered.

'The—the *what*?' cried Sanza.

'The Moon,' she repeated, adding rather foolishly, 'I—I thought perhaps you had guessed.'

Sanza laughed heartily.

'Well, really,' he said, 'you quite took me in. I should suggest your becoming an actress, if it weren't for native prejudices. You'd go far. Oh, very good! Ha, ha!'

'I am not jesting, Sanza,' said Yai sadly. 'I am very earnest. Ever since I was little, I have loved the Moon. As a little child I loved him, and now my heart is not childish, but I love him still. My heart grows glad, as he rises in silver from the edge of the sea and climbs up the hollow sky. When he climbs quickly, I shudder lest he fall; when he lingers, I try to fancy it is for love of me; when he sinks at length into the sea, I weep bitterly.'

Sanza began to humour her.

'Oh yes,' he said, 'the Moon's a wonderful climber. I've noticed that. And a very good fellow, too, from all accounts. I don't happen

to know him personally. He was senior to me at the university. I must get you to introduce us.'

'You jest poorly,' said Yai.

Sanza frowned.

'Come, come,' he resumed presently, 'you know as well as I do that the Moon is just an extinct planet, 237,000 miles distant from the earth. Perhaps you didn't know? Well, selenography is rather a hobby of mine, and I'll give you one or two little facts. The Moon is a subject which has attracted a great many physiologists in all ages. Thanks to the invention of photography, we moderns have accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge regarding it. The negatives obtained at the Lick Observatory, for example, prove conclusively that the immense craters and mountainous ridges visible upon its surface, so far from being surrounded with an atmosphere similar in density to our own, are, in fact, enclosed only by a gaseous envelope, not less than 200 times thinner than the most rarefied atmosphere obtainable on the earth.'

But Yai had shut her ears.

'Sanza,' she said, when he ceased, 'will you release me? If you think me mad, you cannot wish me to be your bride.'

For a moment Sanza hesitated—but for a moment.

'Madness,' he said, 'is a question of degree. We are all potentially mad. If you were left to indulge in these absurd notions, you would certainly become mad, in time. As it is, I fancy you have a touch of Neuromania. And, when you speak, I have noticed a slight tendency to Echolalia. But these are trifles, my dear. Any sudden change of life is apt to dispel far more serious symptoms. Your very defects, small though they are, will make me all the more watchful and tender towards you when I am your husband.'

'You are very cruel and very cowardly,' sobbed Yai, 'and I hate you!'

'Nonsense!' said Sanza, snatching one of her hands and kissing it loudly.

In another minute the room had been sprinkled with rose-leaves and Yai was alone.

At sunset her father came to the room and bent over her and kissed her. 'Do not weep, little daughter,' he said. 'It is well that you should be wed, though you are so unwilling. Sleep happily now, little daughter. To-morrow, all in your honour, the way will be strewn with

with anemones and golden grain. Little lanterns will waver in the almond trees.'

Yai spoke not a word.

But when her father had reached the threshold of her room, she ran swiftly to him and flung her arms around his neck, and whispered to him through tears, 'Forgive me for being always an evil daughter.'

Umanosuké caressed her and spoke gentle words. And when he left her, at length, he barred the door of her room. For in that land there is an old custom, which ordains that the bride's room be sealed on the wedding-eve, lest the bride be stolen away in the night.

Umanosuké's footsteps grew faint in the distance. So soon as she could hear them no more, Yai shook the door, noiselessly, if peradventure it were not rightly barred. It did not yield. Noiselessly she crept across the floor, the rose-leaves brushing her bare and tiny feet. Noiselessly she slid back the wickered grill from her window. She wrapped her skirt very tightly round her, and raised herself on to the ledge. Down a trellis that covered the outer wall she climbed lightly. No one saw her.

Darting swiftly from shadow to shadow, she passed down the long garden, and dragged from its shed the little, reeded skiff that her father had once given to her. She did not dare drag it down the beach, lest the noise of the rustling shingle should betray her. Easily (for it was light as a toy) she lifted it on her shoulder, and carried it down, so, to the darkening waters, launched it, and stepped in.

She knew at what point on the edge of the great sea her lover would rise. She knew by the aspect of the stars that he would rise before the end of another hour. Could she reach the edge of the great sea so soon? Crouching low in the skiff, a little figure scrupulously balanced, she brushed the water with her paddle. Strong and supple was her wrist, and sure were her eyes, and swiftly the frail craft sped on over the waters. Never once did the maid flag nor falter, though her hands grew cold and stiff in their strenuous exercise. Though darkness closed in around her, and the waters rushed past her, on either side, with a shrill sound as of weeping, she had no fear, but only love in her heart. Gazing steadfastly before her at that glimmering, white line, where the sky curves down upon the sea, and ever whispering through her lips the name of her love, she held her swift course over the waters.

Clearer, clearer to her gaze, grew the white line and the arched purple that rested on it. Another minute, and she could hear the waves

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lapping its surface, a sweet monotony of music, seeming to call her on. A few more strokes of her paddle, swept with a final impulse, and the boat bore her with a yet swifter speed. Soon she suffered it to glide on obliquely, till it grazed the white line with its prow. She had reached the tryst of her devotion. Faint and quivering, she lay back and waited there.

After a while, she leant over the side of the boat and peered down into the sea. Far, far under the surface she seemed to descry a little patch of silver, of silver that was moving. She clasped her hands to her eyes and gazed down again. The silver was spreading, wider and wider, under the water, till the water's surface became even as a carpet of dazzling silver.

The Moon rose through the sea, and paused under the canopy of the sky.

So great, so fair was he, of countenance so illustrious, that little Yai did but hide her head in the folds of her garment, daring not to look up at him.

She heard a voice, that was softer and more melancholy than the west wind, saying to her, 'Child of the Ruler of Haokami, why sought you to waylay me?' And again the voice said, 'Why sought you to waylay me?'

'Because,' Yai answered faintly, 'because I have long loved you.'

And as she crouched before him, the Moon covered her with silver, insomuch that she was able to look up into his eyes, being herself radiant, even as he was. And she stretched out her arms to him and besought him that she might sail over the sky with him that night.

'Nay,' said the Moon, 'but you know not what you ask. Over the sky you might sail in my embrace, and love me, and be my darling. I would bear you among the stars and lie with you in the shadows of the clouds. The tiny world would lie outspread beneath us, and in the wonder of our joy we would not heed it. We would mingle the cold silver of our lips, and in the wreath of our arms our love-dreams would come true. But soon I should sink into the sea yonder. On the grey surface of the sea I should leave you to drown.'

'Take me in your arms!' cried the girl.

And the Moon bent down to her and took her gently in his arms.

Next morning, the Sun, as he was rising from the sea, saw a little pale body floating over the waves.

'Why!'

‘Why!’ he exclaimed, ‘there is the child of the ruler of Hao-kami. She was always wayward. I knew she would come to a bad end. And this was to have been her wedding-day too! I suppose she was really in love with me and swam to meet me. How very sad!’ And he covered her with gold.

‘After all,’ he muttered, rising a little higher, ‘it does not do for these human beings to have ideas above their station. It always leads to unhappiness. The dead child down there would soon have forgotten her unfortunate attachment to me, if she had only stayed ashore and married that impertinent little fellow, who is always spying at me through his confounded telescope. And there he is, to be sure! up betimes and strutting about his garden, with a fine new suit on! Quite the bridegroom!’

MAX BEERBOHM.

TO AN EARLY SPRING DAY

O DAY, thou found'st me sleeping ; let me sleep !
 Too many of thy brothers, too like thee,
 Have waked me with such manners. Didst thou peep
 With something of thy sisters' smile, may be,
 I, even then, would sleep ; though they were gay
 And called me oft in leafy flowery May.
 Of banks more soft with moss than any bed,
 With lush bee-peopled canopies o'erhead,
 They knew, and talking led me out to play.

Ah, they were gay, thy sisters ! They were young
 And like the flowers, half divine with dew,
 Caught in their heads' loose roughened manes or flung
 Forth in their frolic. Nothing sad they knew ;
 But thou, thou hast the sob of many sorrows,
 Gloom from a stormy night thy wet wing borrows,
 Each pelting shower, like angry, sudden tears,
 Answers an urgent spurring, which one hears,
 Driving thee on toward disenchanted morrows.

Alas, there is but wind and rain abroad,
 Fatiguing warmth that tempts the sharded buds !
 I would I were a god of stone to hoard,
 Like russet grange, the summer's golden floods,
 All that Greece knew of beauty in her youth—
 Handless and footless, from an isle aloof
 Watching a mainland near across the sea,
 Since heroes on white horses, buoyantly,
 Chanting rode by to meet the dawn of truth.

Like some fair marble god, who pays no heed
 To any day, in comely trance elate,
 While honey-laden summers circling speed,
 As echoes through a stone reverberate,
 Thrilling his stillness—as a song is held
 Spellbound within the temple, where it swelled,

Long after all the choristers have ceased :
 So would I be, and never more released
 To learn how men from such fair gods rebelled.

O Day, grey habited, thou too art sad !
 Thou, too, art all too conscious of the past—
 Of all those leaves that thy forerunners had
 To bathe in, plunge in, fall to sleep at last,
 Tired out like children, in ! Thou, with thy rain
 Pelting wet roofs and dripping boughs, wouldst fain
 Dance among flowers and make the roses bob ;
 Thou wouldst from dells of thyme and clover rob
 Scents to make sea-nymphs sniff and sniff again.

Then let us, Day, go friendly ! help thou me,
 Strengthen my feet and occupy my hands,
 And from all clinging yearning set me free,
 To find in things the look that understands,
 With mother-like alacrity, our need !
 For nature is her children's friend indeed,
 Who need not then be exiles anywhere,
 But, loving beauty, still find beauty there,
 As thou canst find thee comfort in thy speed.

Rough minister of life, thine infant hand
 May once have ushered Psyche through Love's house.
 Viewless and trembling didst thou later stand
 And soothe her sleep with music ? shy as mouse
 Evade, but when, with many a skyey leap
 From cloud-caps downward, came, with meteor sweep,
 Her rosy husband ? Ah, attend my prayers
 Immediate as her unseen ministers,
 Till hope grow real enough to clasp in sleep !

In sleep we may believe, we do attain
 Full knowledge of illusive beauty, and,
 In sleep, we do not know ourselves nor strain,
 Like birds at sea and fainting ere the land,
 To reach a joy that, ever seeming near,
 Lies far beyond our strength. In sleep we hear

As

As echoes hear, who do not weep at songs,
And unmoved watch, like stars, unpitied wrongs.
Then, Day, storm on till sleep be doubly dear.

Press on, and shoulder up thy lagging clouds !
Invigour me ! Born from thine energy
And bright from thy despair, with leaves in crowds,
The spring shall be ! at last the spring shall be !
Beauty shall like a day-dream brave the light—
A day-dream likelier than the dreams of night,
Surmised among thy sisters, Summer Days,
When, 'mid birds singing, I will sing her praise,
Exalting her with this thy strenuous might.

J. STURGE MOORE.

§• YOUNG GIRLS AND DEATH
by
P. Puvis de Chavannes



THE SEVEN PRINCESSES

BY MAURICE MAETERLINCK Translated by ALFRED SUTRO

CHARACTERS

THE OLD KING.

THE OLD QUEEN.

THE PRINCE.

THE SEVEN PRINCESSES.

A MESSENGER.

SCENE—*A large hall of marble, with laurel, lavender, and lilies in porcelain vases. The hall is divided in all its length by seven marble steps, which are strewn with cushions of pale silk, and on these the SEVEN PRINCESSES lie asleep. They are all clad in white robes, and their arms are bare. A silver lamp sheds a faint light upon them. At the end of the hall is a door furnished with massive bolts. To the right and the left of this door are great windows, which almost reach to the ground. Behind these windows is a terrace. The sun is setting: and in the distance is seen a black marshy country, with stagnant pools and forests of pine and oak. Behind the palace, between huge willows, is a sombre, grim-looking inflexible canal, along which a large war-ship is seen advancing.*

[*The old KING and QUEEN and the MESSENGER move along the terrace and watch the war-ship as she draws nearer.*]

THE QUEEN. She is coming under full sail . . .

THE KING. I cannot see clearly, there is so much mist . . .

THE QUEEN. They are rowing . . . they are all rowing . . . They must mean to come right up to the castle windows . . . It is as though she had a thousand feet . . . the sails touch the branches of the willows . . .

THE KING. The ship seems to be wider than the canal . . .

THE QUEEN. They are stopping . . .

THE KING. They will find it difficult to turn . . .

THE QUEEN. They have stopped . . . they have stopped . . . They are dropping the anchor . . . They are mooring the ship against the willows . . . Ah! ah! some one has landed . . . that must be the Prince . . .

THE KING. Look at the swans . . . they are going towards him . . . they want to know what it means . . .

THE QUEEN. Are the Princesses still asleep?

[*They go to the windows and look into the hall.*]

THE KING. Let us wake them . . . we should have done that before . . . we must wake them at once . . .

THE QUEEN. Let us wait till he has come . . . It is too late now . . . There he is! There he is! . . . My God! my God! what are we to do? . . . They are so ill . . . I dare not! I dare not!

THE KING. Shall I open the door?

THE QUEEN. No, no! wait! let us wait!—Oh, how they sleep! they do nothing but sleep! . . . They did not know that he was coming back . . . that he would be here to-day . . . I am afraid to wake them . . . the physician forbade it . . . Do not let us wake them . . . Do not let us wake them yet . . . Oh! oh! I hear a sound of footsteps on the bridge . . .

THE KING. He is there! He is there . . . He is at the foot of the terrace! . . .

[*They leave the window.*]

THE QUEEN. Where is he? where is he?—Is it he?—I can scarcely recognise him . . . Yes, yes, I know him now . . . Oh! how tall he is! how tall he is! He is coming up the stairs . . . Marcellus! Marcellus! Is it you? is it you? . . . Come to us, come; we are so old, we cannot go down to you. . . . Come! come! come! . . .

THE KING. Be careful . . . do not fall . . . the steps are very old . . . they are all shaking . . . Take care! . . .

[*The PRINCE comes on to the terrace and throws himself into the arms of the KING and QUEEN.*]

THE PRINCE. My poor grandam! My poor grandsire!

[*They embrace each other.*]

THE QUEEN. Oh! how handsome you are!—how tall you have grown, my child!—How tall you are, my little Marcellus!—I cannot see you: my eyes are full of tears . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! my poor grandam, how white your hair is! . . . Oh! my poor grandfather, how white your beard is! . . .

THE KING. We are a poor old couple; it will be our turn soon . . .

THE PRINCE. Grandsire, grandsire, why do you stoop like that?

THE KING. I always stoop now . . .

THE QUEEN. We have been expecting you so long . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! my poor grandam, how you are trembling to-night!

THE QUEEN. I always tremble like that, my child . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! my poor grandsire! Oh! my poor grandam! I should scarcely have known you again . . .

THE KING. Nor I either, nor I either . . . My eyes are not very good . . .

THE QUEEN. Where have you been all this time, my child?—Oh! how tall you are!—You are taller than we! . . . See! see! I am crying as though you were dead . . .

THE PRINCE. Why do you greet me with tears in your eyes?

THE QUEEN. No, no, they are not tears, my child . . . They are very different from tears . . . Nothing has happened . . . nothing has happened . . .

THE PRINCE. Where are my seven cousins?

THE QUEEN. Here, here; but be careful, do not speak too loud; they are still asleep . . . it is not good to talk of those who sleep . . .

THE PRINCE. They are asleep? . . . Are they all with you still, all seven? . . .

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, yes; be careful, be careful . . . They sleep here; they always sleep . . .

THE PRINCE. They always sleep? . . . What? what? what? . . . Do . . .? All the seven! . . . all the seven! . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh! oh! oh! what did you think? . . . what have you dared to think, Marcellus, Marcellus? Hush!—They are in there . . . come to the window . . . come and see . . . Quick! quick! come quick! It is time you should see them . . .

[*They go to the window and look into the hall. A long pause.*]

THE PRINCE. Are those my seven cousins? . . . I cannot see them very clearly . . .

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, they are all there, lying on the steps . . . can you see them? can you see them?

THE PRINCE. I see nothing but white shadows . . .

THE QUEEN. Those are your seven cousins! . . . Can you see them in the mirrors? . . .

THE PRINCE. Are those my seven cousins? . . .

THE QUEEN. Look into the mirrors, right at the end of the hall . . . You can see them, you can see them. . . . Come here, come here, you will see better perhaps . . .

THE PRINCE. I see! I see! I see! I can see all the seven of them! . . . One, two, three [*he pauses a moment*] four, five, six, seven . . . I scarcely recognise them . . . Oh! how white they all are! . . . Oh! how beautiful they all are . . . Oh! how pale they all are! . . . But why are they all asleep?

THE QUEEN. They always sleep . . . They have been asleep since noon . . . They are so ill! . . . It has become almost impossible to wake them . . . They did not know of your coming . . . we were afraid to disturb them . . . It is better they should awake of their own accord . . . They are not happy, and it is not our fault . . . We are too old, too old; every one is too old for them . . . One grows too old without knowing it . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! how beautiful they are! how beautiful they are! . . .

THE QUEEN. They came to us when their parents died . . . since then one can scarcely say that they have been alive . . . It is too cold in this castle . . . They come from a warm land . . . They are always seeking the sun, but it comes so seldom . . . There was a little sunshine on the canal this morning, but the trees are too large; there is too much shade; there is nothing but shade . . . And the sky is never clear: it is always hidden by the mist . . . Oh! why do you stare like that!—Do you see anything strange?

THE PRINCE. Oh! how pale they all are!

THE QUEEN. They have eaten nothing yet . . . They could not stay in the garden: the glare of the grass dazzled them . . . They are in a fever . . . They came in at noon, holding one another by the hand . . . They are so weak they can scarcely walk alone . . . They were all trembling with fever . . . What it is that ails them no one can tell . . . They sleep here every day . . .

THE PRINCE. They look so strange! . . . Oh! oh! how strange they look! I dare not look at them . . . Is this their bed-room, then?

THE QUEEN. No, no; it is not their bed-room . . . You can see; there are no beds . . . their seven little beds are up higher, in the tower.—They come here, waiting for the night . . .

THE PRINCE. I am beginning to distinguish them . . .

THE QUEEN. Come nearer, come nearer; but do not touch the window . . . You will see better when the sun has set: there is still too much light outside . . . You will see better presently. Go close up to the panes, but make no noise . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! how light it is in there! . . .

THE QUEEN. It will be lighter still after nightfall . . . The night is about to fall . . .

THE KING. What is about to fall?

THE QUEEN. I am speaking of the night . . . [*to the PRINCE*] Can you see anything?

THE PRINCE. There is a great crystal bowl on a stand . . .

THE QUEEN. That is nothing ; it is filled with water ; they are always so thirsty when they awake ! . . .

THE PRINCE. But why is that lamp burning ? . . .

THE QUEEN. They always light it. They knew that they would sleep for many hours. They lit the lamp at noon so as not to awake in darkness . . . They are afraid of the dark . . .

THE PRINCE. How tall they are ! . . .

THE QUEEN. They are still growing . . . They are growing too tall . . . Perhaps that is the secret of their sickness . . . Do you recognise them ? . . .

THE PRINCE. I should perhaps recognise them if I saw them by daylight . . .

THE QUEEN. You played with them so often when they were children . . . Look at them ! look at them !

THE PRINCE. I can see nothing clearly but their little bare feet . . .

THE KING [*looking through another window*]. I cannot see very well to-night . . .

THE PRINCE. They are too far away from us . . .

THE QUEEN. There is something on the mirrors this evening ; I cannot think what it can be . . .

THE PRINCE. There is a mist on the window-panes . . . I will brush it away . . .

THE QUEEN. No ! no ! Do not touch the window ! They would wake with a start !—The mist comes from within ; it is on the inside ; it is the heat of the room . . .

THE PRINCE. I can see the faces of six of them quite well ; but there is one, in the centre . . .

THE KING. They are all very much alike : I can only distinguish them by the jewels of their necklaces . . .

THE PRINCE. There is one whose face I cannot see . . .

THE QUEEN. Which of them do you like the best . . .

THE PRINCE. The one whose face I cannot see . . .

THE QUEEN. Which one ? I am a little hard of hearing . . .

THE PRINCE. The one whose face I cannot see . . .

THE KING. Which one is that ? I can hardly see any of them . . .

THE PRINCE. She is in the centre . . .

THE QUEEN. I knew that you would only look at her ! . . .

THE PRINCE. Who is she ?

THE QUEEN. Surely you know ! there is no need for me to tell you . .

THE PRINCE. Is it Ursule?

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, yes! Who could it be but Ursule! It is Ursule! it is Ursule, who has waited for you these seven years! by day and by night she has been waiting for you! . . . Do you recognise her? . . .

THE PRINCE. I cannot see her well; there is a shadow over her . . .

THE QUEEN. Yes; there is a shadow over her; I do not know what it is . . .

THE PRINCE. I think it is the shadow of a column . . . I shall see her better presently when the sun has quite set . . .

THE QUEEN. No, no! That shadow is not cast by the sun . . .

THE PRINCE. Let us see whether it moves . . .

THE KING. I see what it is: it is the shadow of the lamp . . .

THE QUEEN. She is not lying like the others . . .

THE KING. She is sleeping more heavily, that is all . . .

THE PRINCE. She sleeps like a little child . . .

THE KING. Come to this window: perhaps you will see better from here.

THE PRINCE [*goes to another window*]. No, I see her no better; I cannot see her face . . .

THE QUEEN. Come to this window: perhaps you will see better from here . . .

THE PRINCE [*goes to another window*]. No, I see her no better . . . It is very difficult to see her . . . One would think she were hiding her face . . .

THE QUEEN. Her face is hardly visible . . .

THE PRINCE. I can see all but her face . . . It seems to be turned quite up, to the sky . . .

THE QUEEN. But you only look at her! . . .

THE PRINCE [*still looking*]. She is taller than the others . . .

THE QUEEN. Why have you eyes only for the one whom you cannot see? . . . There are six others! . . .

THE PRINCE. I am looking at them too . . . Oh, how well one can see the others! . . .

THE QUEEN. Do you remember them? Geneviève, Hélène, and Christabelle . . . on the other side Madeleine, Claire, and Claribelle, with the emeralds . . . See how they hold one another by the hand, all the seven . . . They have fallen asleep hand in hand . . . Oh! oh! the little sisters! . . . They are afraid they may get lost while they sleep! . . . My God! my God! if they would only wake! . . .

THE PRINCE. Yes, yes: let us wake them . . . Shall I wake them?

THE QUEEN. No, no: not yet, not yet . . . And we must not look at them any more: come away, do not look at them any more; they will have bad dreams . . . I will not look at them any more; I will not look at them any more! . . . I should break the windows! . . . Let us not look any more . . . we shall be afraid! . . . Come . . . let us go on the terrace; we will talk of other things; we have so much to say to each other . . . Come, come! it would frighten them if they were to turn round; it would frighten them to see us all at the windows . . . [*To the KING.*] And you too, you too; come, do not press that white beard of yours against the glass; you do not know how frightful you look! . . . For the love of God, come away, both of you! . . . Come, come, I tell you! . . . You do not know what is before us . . . Come here, come here, turn away, turn away! look the other way! look the other way for a moment! . . . They are so ill, they are so ill! . . . let us leave them . . . let them sleep! . . .

THE PRINCE [*turning round*]. Why, what is it?—Oh! how dark it is out here! . . . where are you? . . . I cannot see you . . .

THE KING. Wait a little: the light of the room has dazzled you . . .

I cannot see either . . . come. We are here . . .

[*They leave the windows*].

THE PRINCE. Oh! how dark the country is! . . . where are we?

THE KING. The sun has set . . .

THE QUEEN. Marcellus, why did you not come sooner, Marcellus?

THE PRINCE. The messenger told you: I have long wanted to come . . .

THE QUEEN. They have been waiting for you these many years! They were always in this room, watching the canal, night and day. . . . When the sun shone, they would go to the opposite bank . . . there is a hill with a wide view over the cliffs, though the sea is hidden . . .

THE PRINCE. What is that glimmer under the trees?

THE KING. It is the canal through which you came; there is always a glimmer on the water . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! how dark it is to-night!—I scarcely know where I am: I feel like a stranger . . .

THE KING. The sky has become suddenly clouded . . .

THE PRINCE. The wind is in the willows . . .

THE KING. There is always wind there, day and night . . . We are not far from the sea.—Listen; it is raining . . .

THE PRINCE. It sounds to me like tears dropping round the castle . . .

THE KING. It is the rain falling on the water : a soft, gentle rain . . .

THE QUEEN. To me it is like weeping in Heaven . . .

THE PRINCE. Oh! how the water sleeps, between those walls! . . .

THE QUEEN. It always sleeps like that: the water is very old, too . . .

THE PRINCE. The swans have taken shelter under the bridge . . .

THE KING. See, the peasants are driving home their flocks . . .

THE PRINCE. They look very old and very poor . . .

THE KING. They are very poor; I am the king of a very poor people . . . It is growing cold . . .

THE PRINCE. What is on the other side of the water?

THE KING. There?—They were flowers: the cold has killed them . . .

[*At this moment a monotonous chant is faintly heard, coming from far away. Only the refrain is audible; this seems to be repeated in chorus, at regular intervals.*]

THE DISTANT VOICES. *Atlantic! Atlantic!*

THE KING. Hark!

THE PRINCE. Those are the sailors:—they must be turning the ship; they are getting ready to leave . . .

THE DISTANT VOICES. *We shall never come back!*

We shall never come back!

THE QUEEN. All the sails are set . . .

THE PRINCE. They leave to-night . . .

THE DISTANT VOICES. *Atlantic! Atlantic!*

THE KING. Is it true that they will not come back?

THE PRINCE. I don't know; perhaps not the same ones . . .

THE DISTANT VOICES. *We shall never come back!*

We shall never come back!

THE QUEEN. You seem unhappy, my child . . .

THE PRINCE. I?—Why should I be unhappy?—I came to see her and I have seen her . . . I can see her closer if I wish . . . I can sit by her side if I wish . . . Can I not open the door and take her hand? I can clasp her in my arms whenever I wish: I have only to wake her . . . Why should I be unhappy?

THE QUEEN. And still you do not look happy! . . . I am nearly seventy-five years old . . . and I have done nothing but wait for you! . . . It is not you! no! . . . It is not you, after all! . . . [*She turns her head away and sobs.*]

THE KING. Why, what is the matter? Why are you crying?

THE QUEEN. It is nothing ; it is nothing ;—it is not I who am crying . . . Do not mind me—one often cries without a reason ;—I am so old to-day.—It is over now . . .

THE PRINCE. I shall look happier presently . . .

THE QUEEN. Come, come ; they may have opened their eyes and be waiting for us . . . give me your hand ; lead me to the windows ; let us go and look at the windows . . .

THE DISTANT VOICES. *Atlantic ! Atlantic !*

[*They all go back to the windows, and look through again.*]

THE PRINCE. I cannot see yet . . . it is too light . . .

THE QUEEN. Something has changed in there ! . . .

THE KING. I can see nothing at all.

THE PRINCE. There is more light than there was before . . .

THE QUEEN. It is not as it was ; something has changed in there . . .

THE PRINCE. The light still dazzles my eyes . . .

THE QUEEN. They are not as we left them . . .

THE PRINCE. Yes, yes ; I think they have moved a little . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh ! oh ! Christabelle and Claribelle ! . . . Look, look ! . . . They were holding Ursule's hands in theirs . . . They no longer hold their sister's hands . . . They have let her hands fall . . . They have turned to the other side . . .

THE PRINCE. They have been on the point of waking . . .

THE QUEEN. We have come too late ! We have come too late ! . . .

THE KING. I can see nothing but the lilies by the windows ;—they are closed . . .

THE PRINCE. They know that it is evening . . .

THE KING. There is a light, however.

THE PRINCE. How strangely she holds her hand . . .

THE QUEEN. Who ?

THE PRINCE. Ursule . . .

THE QUEEN. What hand is that ? . . . I did not notice it before . . .

THE PRINCE. It was hidden in the others . . .

THE KING. I do not know what you mean : I cannot see as far as the mirrors . . .

THE QUEEN. She must be in pain ! . . . She must be in pain ! . . . She cannot sleep like that ; it is not natural . . . If she would only let her hand fall !—My God, my God, make her drop that little hand ! . . . Her little arm must hurt all this time !

THE PRINCE. I cannot see on what it is resting . . .

THE QUEEN. I will not have her sleep like that . . . I have never seen

her sleep like that . . . It is not a good sign . . . It is not a good sign ! . . . She will not be able to move that hand . . .

THE KING. There is no cause for such alarm . . .

THE PRINCE. The others are sleeping more quietly . . .

THE QUEEN. How firmly their eyes are closed ! How firmly their eyes are closed ! Oh ! oh ! the little sisters ! the little sisters ! . . .

What can we do ? . . . Is there anything we can do ? . . .

THE KING. Hush ! hush ! do not talk so near the window . . .

THE QUEEN. I am not so near as you think . . .

THE KING. Your lips are pressed against the glass . . .

THE PRINCE. I can see something in there—I don't know what it is . . .

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, so can I. I am beginning to see something . . . It stretches right up to the door . . .

THE PRINCE. There is something on the steps . . . It is not a shadow . . . it cannot be a shadow . . . I cannot think what it is . . . It might be her hair . . .

THE QUEEN. But why should her hair be hanging down ? . . . Look at the others . . . Theirs is all fastened up . . . Look . . .

THE PRINCE. I tell you it is her hair ! . . . It is moving . . . Oh ! how beautiful her hair is ! . . . Can she be ill, with hair like that ! . . .

THE QUEEN. She never sleeps with her hair down . . . One would say she was thinking of going out . . .

THE PRINCE. Did she say nothing to you ? . . .

THE QUEEN. At noon, as she shut the door, she cried, 'Pray do not wake us any more.' And I kissed her so as not to see how sad she was . . .

THE PRINCE. How cold they must be, with their little feet almost bare upon the flags ! . . .

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes : they must be cold !—Oh do not look at them so greedily ! [*To the KING.*] Nor you either ! nor you either ! Do not look at them every moment ! Do not keep looking at them !—Do not let us all look together ! . . . They are not happy ! . . . They are not happy ! . . .

THE KING. Why, what now !—Are you the only one who may look at them ?—What ails you to-night ?—You are unreasonable . . . I do not understand you . . . You want all the others to look away ; you want all the others to look away . . . Is this not our concern as much as yours ?

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, it is, it is . . . For the love of God, do not say such things again ! . . . Oh ! oh ! . . . do not look at me ! Do not

SC LE PREMIER BAL

by

Charles Conder



look at me just now! . . . My God! my God! how motionless they are! . . .

THE KING. They will not wake to-night . . . we had better go and sleep ourselves . . .

THE QUEEN. We must wait a little! we must wait a little! . . . We shall perhaps know what this means . . .

THE KING. We cannot stop at these windows for ever: we must do something . . .

THE PRINCE. Perhaps we can wake them from here . . .

THE KING. I will knock softly at the door.

THE QUEEN. No, no! Never! Never! . . . Oh! No, not you! not you! You would knock too loud. . . . Be careful! Oh, be careful! They are afraid of everything . . . I will knock at the window myself, if it must be . . . It is better that they should know who knocks . . . Wait, wait . . .

[*She knocks very softly at the window.*]

THE PRINCE. They do not wake . . .

THE KING. I can see nothing at all . . .

THE QUEEN. I will knock a little louder . . . [*She knocks at the window again.*] They do not stir yet . . . [*She knocks again.*] . . . The room might be full of cotton wool . . . Are you sure it is sleep?—They may have fainted . . . I cannot see them breathe . . . [*She knocks at another window.*] Knock a little louder . . . Knock at the other windows. Oh! oh! how thick this glass is! [*The QUEEN and the PRINCE knock nervously with both hands.*] How still they are! how still they are!—It is the deep sleep of sickness. . . . It is the sleep of fever that will not go . . . I want to see them close! I want to see them close! . . . They do not hear the noise we make . . . Their sleep is not natural . . . It can do them no good . . . I dare not knock louder . . .

THE PRINCE [*listening eagerly*]. I cannot hear the slightest sound . . .

[*A long pause.*]

THE QUEEN [*suddenly bursting into tears, her face pressed against the window*]. Oh! How they sleep! How they sleep! . . . My God! My God! Deliver them! Deliver them! How those little hearts of theirs sleep!—One can no longer hear their hearts beat! . . . How awful is this sleep of theirs!—Oh! There is always dread around sleep! . . . In their dormitory I am always afraid! . . . I can no longer see their little souls! . . . Where are their little souls! . . . They

frighten me! They frighten me! . . . Ah! Now I know what it is! . . . How they sleep, the little sisters! . . . Oh! how they sleep, how they sleep! . . . I feel they will sleep for ever! . . . My God, my God, I pity them! . . . They are not happy! they are not happy! . . . Now I can see it all! . . . Seven little souls all the night! . . . Seven little defenceless souls! . . . Seven little friendless souls! . . . Their mouths are wide open . . . Seven little open mouths! . . . Oh! I am sure they are thirsty! . . . I am sure they are terribly thirsty! . . . And all those closed eyes! . . . Oh! how lonely all the seven are! all the seven! all the seven! . . . And how they sleep! How they sleep! . . . How they sleep, the little queens! . . . I am sure they are not sleeping! . . . But what a sleep! What a great sleep! . . . Oh, wake the poor hearts! Wake the little queens! . . . Wake the little sisters! All the seven! all the seven! . . . I can bear it no longer! My God! my God! I pity them! I pity them! and I dare not wake them! . . . Oh! the light is growing dim! . . . quite dim! . . . quite dim! . . . And I no longer dare wake them! . . .

[She sobs piteously by the window.]

THE KING. What is the matter?—But, tell me, what is the matter?—Come, come, do not look at them any more; it is better not to see them . . . Come away, come away, come away . . .

[He tries to draw her away.]

THE PRINCE. Grandam! grandam! . . . What have you seen? . . . I have not seen anything . . . There is nothing, there is nothing . . .

THE KING *[to the PRINCE]*. It is nothing, it is nothing; do not mind her: she is very old, and it is late. . . . She is overstrung.—It does women good to cry. She often cries during the night . . . *[To the QUEEN.]* Come, come, come here . . . Be careful . . . You nearly fell! Lean on me . . . Do not cry; do not cry any more, come . . . *[He embraces her tenderly.]* It is nothing; they are asleep . . . We sleep too . . . We all sleep like that . . . Have you never seen people asleep before? . . .

THE QUEEN. Never! Never like this evening!—Open the door! Open the door! . . . We do not love them enough! . . . We cannot love them!—Open the door! Open the door! . . .

THE KING. Yes, yes, we shall open the door . . . Calm yourself, calm yourself—do not think of it, we shall open it, we shall open it. That is what I have been wanting to do all the time; you would not let

me . . . Come, come, do not cry any more . . . Be reasonable . . . I am old too, but I am reasonable . . . Come, come, do not cry . . .

THE QUEEN. There, there, it is over . . . I am not crying now, I am not crying now . . . They must not hear me cry when they awake . . .

THE KING. Come with me; I will open very gently: we will go in together . . . [*He tries to open the door; the handle creaks, and the latch is seen to rise and fall inside the room.*] Oh! oh! what is the matter with the lock?—I cannot open the door . . . We must push . . . I don't know what it is . . . I did not know it was so difficult to get into this room . . . Will you try? [*The QUEEN tries, but in vain.*] I never go in there . . . The door will not open . . . They must have drawn the bolt . . . Yes, yes; the door is locked . . . we cannot open it . . .

THE QUEEN. They always lock it . . . Oh! oh! we cannot leave them like this! . . . They have been asleep so long!

THE PRINCE. We might open a window . . .

THE KING. The windows do not open . . .

THE PRINCE. It seems to me that it is less light in the room . . .

THE KING. It is not less light; but the sky is clearing.—Do you see the stars?

THE PRINCE. What can we do?

THE KING. I do not know . . . There is another entrance . . .

THE PRINCE. Another entrance! Where?

THE QUEEN. No! no! I know what you mean! . . . Not that way! Not that way! I will not go down there! . . .

THE KING. We need not go down; we will stay here; Marcellus shall go alone . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh! no, no, no! . . . Let us wait . . .

THE KING. But, really, what do you want us to do?—We cannot get in any other way . . . it is the simplest plan . . .

THE PRINCE. Is there another entrance?

THE KING. Yes; there is another little entrance . . . you cannot see it from here . . . but you will find it easily, you must go down . . .

THE PRINCE. Down where?

THE KING. Come with me. [*He draws him aside.*] It is not a door . . . it can scarcely be called a door . . . it is rather a trap-door . . . it is a stone that lifts up . . . It is at the far end of the room . . . You must go through the vaults . . . you know . . . Then you must come up again . . . You will want a lamp . . . you might lose your way . . . or knock against the . . . marbles . . . you know what I

mean? . . . Be careful: there are chains between . . . the little gangways . . . But you should know the way . . . You have been down there more than once in your time . . .

THE PRINCE. I have been down there more than once in my time?

THE KING. Yes, yes: when your mother . . .

THE PRINCE. When my mother? . . . Ah! is that the way I have to go? . . .

THE KING [*nodding*]. Just so!—And . . . your father too . . .

THE PRINCE. Yes, yes, I remember . . . and others besides . . .

THE KING. You see! . . . The stone is not sealed down; you have only to push . . . But be careful . . . The flags are not very regular . . . The head of one of the busts leans across the path . . . it is of marble . . . And there is a cross with very long arms . . . take care . . . do not hurry: you have ample time . . .

THE PRINCE. And it is down there that I must . . . ? . . .

THE KING. Yes! . . . You will want a lamp . . . [*He goes along the terrace and shouts.*] A lamp! a lamp! a little lamp! . . . [*To the PRINCE.*] We will wait here, at the windows . . . We are too old to go down . . . We could never come up again . . . [*A lighted lamp is brought.*] Ah! here is the lamp; take the little lamp. . . .

THE PRINCE. Yes, yes; the little lamp . . .

[*At this moment, suddenly from the far distance, are heard loud shouts of joy from the sailors. The masts, bulwarks, and sails of the ship are lit up, and stand out against the night, where the canal meets the sky, between the willows.*]

THE KING. Oh! oh! what is that?

THE PRINCE. It is the sailors . . . They are dancing on the deck; they have been drinking . . .

THE KING. They have illuminated the ship . . .

THE PRINCE. They are glad to leave . . . They are about to set sail . . .

THE KING. Well, will you go down? . . . This is the way . . .

THE QUEEN. No, no, do not go! . . . Do not go that way! . . . do not wake them! do not wake them! . . . you know how they need rest! . . . I am frightened! . . .

THE PRINCE. If you wish it, I will not wake the others . . . I will only wake one . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh! oh! oh!

THE KING. Do not make a noise as you enter . . .

THE PRINCE. I am afraid they may not recognise me . . .

THE KING. They are sure to . . . Eh! eh! be careful with the little lamp! . . . There is a strong wind . . . the wind is trying to blow it out . . .

THE PRINCE. I hope they will not all wake together . . .

THE KING. What does that matter? . . . Do not wake them abruptly, that is all . . .

THE PRINCE. I shall be alone among them . . . It will look as though . . . They will be frightened . . .

THE KING. You must replace the stone before you wake them . . . They will not notice it . . . They do not know what is beneath the room they sleep in . . .

THE PRINCE. They will take me for a stranger . . .

THE KING. We shall be at the windows . . . Go, go!—Be careful with the lamp; and above all, do not lose your way in the vaults; they stretch very far . . . and take care to replace the stone . . . Come up as quickly as you can . . . We shall be waiting at the windows. . . . Go, go . . . and be careful! be careful! . . .

[*The PRINCE leaves the terrace. The old KING and QUEEN stand at the windows, their faces pressed against the glass. A long pause.*]

THE DISTANT VOICES. *Atlantic! Atlantic!*

THE KING [*turning his head and looking towards the canal*]. Ah! ah! They are going . . . They will have a good wind to-night . . .

THE DISTANT VOICES. *We shall never come back!*
We shall never come back!

THE KING [*looking towards the canal*]. They will be in the open sea before midnight . . .

THE VOICES [*further and further away*]. *Atlantic! Atlantic!*

THE KING [*looking into the room*]. If only he do not lose his way in the darkness . . .

THE VOICES [*now scarcely audible*]. *We shall never come back!*
We shall never come back!

[*A silence. The ship disappears between the willows.*]

THE KING [*looking towards the canal*]. She is out of sight—[*Looking into the room*]. Has he not come in yet?—[*Turning towards the canal*]. The ship has gone! . . . [To the QUEEN.] Don't you hear me?—Why don't you answer?—Where are you? Look at the canal.—They are gone; they will be in the open sea before midnight . . .

THE QUEEN [*mechanically*]. They will be in the open sea before midnight . . .

THE KING [*looking into the room*]. Can you see the stone he has to raise?—It is covered over with inscriptions; it must be hidden beneath the laurels.—How tall Marcellus has grown, has he not?—We should have done better to awake them before he landed.—I wanted you to wake them.—We should have avoided all these scenes.—I do not know why he looked so unhappy this evening.—It is wrong of them to draw the bolts; I will have them taken away.—If only his lamp do not go out!—Where are you?—Can you see anything?—Why do you not answer?—If only he do not lose his way in the darkness.—Can you hear me?

THE QUEEN. If only he do not lose his way in the darkness . . .

THE KING. You are right.—Don't you think it is growing cold?—How cold they must be, on the marble!—He seems to be taking a long time.—If only his little lamp do not go out.—Why do you not answer? What are you thinking of?

THE QUEEN. If only his little lamp . . . The stone! the stone! the stone! . . .

THE KING. Is he there?—Is he coming in?—I cannot see so far . . .

THE QUEEN. It is rising! . . . It is rising! . . . There is a light! . . . look! . . . listen! listen! . . . How it creaks on its hinges! . . .

THE KING. I told him to go in very gently . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh! He is going very gently . . . see, see, there is his hand, with the lamp . . .

THE KING. Yes, yes, I see the little lamp . . . Why does he not go in? . . .

THE QUEEN. He cannot . . . He is lifting the stone very slowly . . . Yes, yes; very slowly . . . Oh! how it creaks! How it creaks! How it creaks! . . . They will wake in a start! . . .

THE KING. I cannot see what is happening . . . I know the stone is very heavy . . .

THE QUEEN. He is coming in . . . He is coming up . . . He is coming up slower and slower . . . How the stone creaks now! . . . oh! oh! how it creaks! how it creaks! It seems to cry like a child! . . . He is half in the room . . . three steps more, three steps more! [*clapping her hands*]. He is there now, he is there! . . . Look, look! . . . They are waking up! . . . They are all waking up with a start! . . .

THE KING. Has he replaced the stone?

[*The PRINCE, leaving the grave-stone that he has just raised, stops at the foot of the marble staircase, his lamp still in his hand. At the last*

creaking of the hinges, six PRINCESSES open their eyes, and hesitate for an instant on the threshold of sleep; then, with one common movement, they rise as he approaches them, their arms outstretched in gestures of awakening. One only, URSULE, still lies at full length on the marble steps, motionless in the midst of her sisters, while these exchange with the PRINCE a long look, full of amazement, bewilderment, and silence.]

THE QUEEN [*at window*]. Ursule! Ursule! Ursule! . . . She does not awake! . . .

THE KING. Patience! patience!—She is sleeping a little heavily . . .

THE QUEEN [*shouting, her face against the glass*]. Ursule!—Ursule! Wake her! [*She knocks at the window.*] Marcellus! Marcellus!—Wake her! Wake her too! Ursule! Ursule! . . . Marcellus! Marcellus! . . . She has not heard! . . . Ursule! Ursule! rise! He is there! He is there! . . . It is time! It is time!—[*She knocks at another window.*] Marcellus! Marcellus! look in front of you! look! She is still asleep! . . . [*She knocks at another window.*] Oh! oh!—Christabelle! Christabelle! Claribelle! Claribelle! Claire! Claire! You, Claire! . . . She has not heard! . . . [*going from window to window, knocking violently at them all*]. Ursule! Ursule! He has come back! He is there! He is there! . . . It is time! It is time! . . .

THE KING [*knocking at the window*]. Yes, yes, wake her! . . . Why do you not wake her! . . . We are waiting . . .

[*The PRINCE, heedless of the noises from without, silently approaches the one PRINCESS who has not risen. He looks at her for a moment—hesitates—then kneels before her and touches one of her arms, bare and motionless, that lie on the silken cushions. At the touch of her flesh he starts to his feet with a long look of horror in his eyes, and slowly turns his gaze upon the six PRINCESSES, all silent and extremely pale. These seem to be hesitating, and trembling with a desire to fly; but at length, with one common movement, they bend over their prostrate sister, raise her in their arms, and, amid the profoundest silence, bear her to the topmost of the seven marble steps. Her body is already rigid, and her face cold and stark. While this is taking place, the KING, the QUEEN, and the people of the castle, who have hastened to the spot, are shouting and knocking violently at all the windows of the room. The two scenes take place simultaneously.*]

THE QUEEN. She is not asleep! She is not asleep!—That is not sleep! That is not sleep! That is no longer sleep! [*She rushes*

wildly from window to window: she knocks, she shakes the iron bars: she trembles in every limb, and her straggling white hair beats against the glass.] I tell you she is no longer asleep! [*To the KING.*] Oh! oh! oh! You are a man of stone! . . . Shout! shout! shout! For God's sake, I tell you, shout! I am screaming my heart out and he doesn't understand!—Run! run! scream! scream! He has seen nothing! nothing! nothing! nothing! never! never! never!

THE KING. What? what? What has happened? what has happened? Where shall I shout?

THE QUEEN. There! There! Everywhere! everywhere! On the terrace! on the water! in the meadows! Shout! shout! shout! . . .

THE KING [*at the end of the terrace*]. Oh! . . . oh! . . . Come here! Come here! Ursule! Ursule! . . . Something has happened! . . .

THE QUEEN [*at the window*]. Ursule! Ursule! . . . Sprinkle water on her.—Yes, yes, do that, my child! . . . Perhaps it is not . . . Oh! oh! oh! . . . her little head! . . .

[*Servants, soldiers, peasants, women rush on to the terrace with torches and lanterns.*]

Ursule! Ursule! . . . Perhaps it is not that . . . Perhaps it is nothing at all! . . . Eh! eh! Claribelle, Claribelle! take care! . . . She is falling! . . . Do not tread on her hair! . . . Open the door! open the door!—She will wake! she will wake! . . . water! water! water!—Open! open! the door! the door! the door! . . . We cannot get in! All is closed! all is closed! . . . You are as deaf as the dead! . . . Help me! [*To the people about her.*] You are horrible people! My hands! . . . my hands! . . . Do not you see my hands? . . . Help me! help me! Oh! oh! It is late! . . . It is too late! . . . It is too late! . . . locked! locked! locked! . . .

ALL [*shaking the door and knocking at the windows*]. Open! open! open! open! . . .

[*A black curtain falls suddenly.*]

RENEWAL

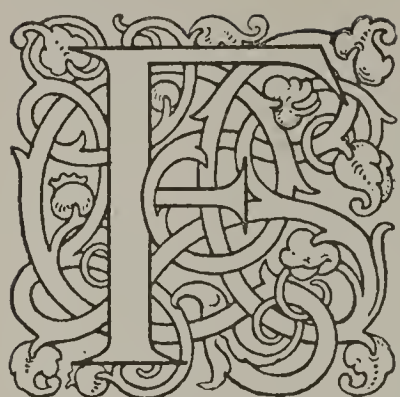
As the young phoenix, duteous to his sire,
 Lifts in his beak the creature he has been,
 And, laying o'er the corse broad vans for screen,
 Bears it to solitudes, erects a pyre,
 And, soon as it is wasted by the fire,
 Grides with disdainful claw the ashes clean,
 Then spreading unencumbered wings serene,
 Mounts to the æther with renewed desire :

So joyously I lift myself above
 The life I buried in hot flames to-day ;
 The flames themselves are dead—and I can range
 Alone through the untarnished sky I love,
 And trust myself, as from the grave one may,
 To the enchanting miracles of change.

1895

MICHAEL FIELD

VIRAGO



OR several days the blur of streaming rain had waved across the prospect, and on the last two wakeful nights she had lain tossing and listening to the wet rustle outside, hearing it whisper ominous tidings sometimes. But before she could distinctly hear what the full tidings might be, again the wind would recover from its lull and suther wildly around the tower and mouldering bastions. Mayhap a fragment of the tiled roof would raise a flake in that searching blast and then it would be caught, ripped off, and tinkle downwards like a castanet,—or some loose beam would be creaking back with a reaction from the strain it had borne. Once a stone on the parapet, undermined and tilted by many former storms, and never attended to by the few dwellers in this lonely place, lost the little balance remaining to it and plunged into the court with a heavy bound, making her heart close inward for an instant. She laughed next minute as she heard its roll upon the rock, knowing what the unusual noise meant. So there was always some interruption to the fancied meaning in the whisper outside, and at dawn she slept without a single dream of portent.

‘Why does he not come?’ she said, when the grey day had awakened her with a watery gleam of sunshine. She had not asked the question before, because none of those few could know her lover as she herself did, and she had been the last to bid him farewell, a farewell but for a little while, he said. But she asked it now, although she knew that they could give her no answer. And as they dared not invent such answer, none came to her question; indeed, she did not expect one from them, but gave it to herself.

‘He has met them, conquered them, and chased them far, until it is a long journey back even to that distant place where we parted. To travel up into this highland with heavy spoil is a different thing from coming as I did. Still, the plains are not so wide as others I have known.’

The rain thinned as the hours passed, then ceased.

She had been weary of these dark chambers of hewn stone after a day of living in them, and had borne the succeeding days with a more and more mighty impatience.

Now she went out into the courtyard with a quick breath, and stood by the broken piece of parapet and gazed upwards as the clouds sailed across, peeping through the rifts, which gave her small glimpses of the blue

§ THE DEATH OF ABEL
by
George Frederick Watts, R.A.



blue infinite outside their mantle. And then in a lull of the gale she heard a far stream, that came roaring down from the hills to swell its river.

It was a call not to be resisted by the amazon, now that her wound had nearly healed. She still wore the mailed sark of that day of their first victory, and the crooked blade hung at her girdle. At her command the serving woman brought the light steel cap and woollen mantle ; and as they watched her, uncertain whether or not to anger her by obeying their chief and restrain her, she stepped through the gateway and ran gleefully along the mountain side, hoping at each turn of the washed path to see his lances and plumes somewhere below.

Once she thought, after two or three disappointments, that she heard the sound of his voice amidst the murmur of his men. But no, it was only the voice of the torrent tumbling down the rocks and booming on the steps of the range.

After a while she came to this, her hair flying about in the wind, and watched it as she twined up her locks again under the casque. This must be that river by whose bank she had once come from the red field to the stronghold, by which he too would come before long. She wandered downward through the thickets and through the trees, and at last reached the level across which the stream was plunging. Here she looked for his appearing, but no one was to be seen upon the steaming meadow-flats.

As these swathes of mist rose higher, the breeze caught them and twisted them into fantastic shapes ere they dispersed. She saw in them whatever her fancy chose, and that was nothing else than a man on a grey charger at the head of other riders ; skirting the edges of the glades, she saw again and again the vision of what she longed for in reality, and at last she found a causeway and crossed to those forest openings on the other side, hoping and expecting to see him at every turn, or to hear the splash of a troop through the shallow pools. But the hope which sprang up anew at every vista vanished continually.

At last she was on the point of returning, and breaking the spell of this desire for search, as the vanity of it became more plain to her, when she spied a human being sitting wearily under a tree at one of the turns in the woodland. Its head was bowed forward on its knees, and it had clasped itself together as if to keep itself warm from the chill of the marshland morning.

She went up to it and laid a hand upon its shoulder, and when there was no upturn of head, shook it strongly. At this the man turned

aside and rolled into the lush grass as if he had been knotted together, and she saw him to be dead. Accustomed herself to deal death to her foes whenever possible, this did not chill her veins as it would those of a slave woman. But the chill came on her when she saw the face of her husband's foster-brother, whose post was at the left hand of his chieftain in all that might betide.

When she saw him there dead and alone, with the marks of hard fighting and fasting upon him, she knew that her lord would not come to her in the stronghold, however many days she waited. And at first she cried out loudly, and waved her hands in the air. Then she turned and hurried back to the slope of the high land, full of angry amazement at this strange ill chance, which had overwhelmed the bravest man that ever bore a woman on his saddlebow or clove a foe's crown.

But the mist was thick and hid the way, and at last she came upon the bank of the river, and stood, watching it foam and pour past, with a mind as seething as that flood, wishing that she had never left him, but let her wound take its chance of healing, as she had done in the fierce days before she had met him and been conquered and loved him. At any rate she now would have been with him instead of here, and would not have had the wearisome and ignoble waiting of the last seven days. Maybe at this very moment he had his back to a wall and a half-circle of foes writhing on the ground in front of him, while the crowd of armed curs huddled together for a moment before they could revive enough courage to make another rush on the lion standing at bay. She saw it and stamped her foot and clenched her hands with longing. . . .

Oh! to be there, just as she was, with her crooked heavy blade, she asked no more of Fate. Only to be able to place her back against his and then to swiftly wrap the wool round her left arm, scream his name at the waverers, and complete the other half of that red circle. No need then of any wall. They would whirl round like dragon-flies, now this way, now that, with their steel edges whistling and sweeping; or like reapers in corn-time, and always the circle wherever they went.

She had done it before with him, and the memory of that crowded hour tantalised her now, so that she would have wept bitterly, had such a thing been possible to her nature. As it was, she could but trample the sand with a furious foot, and eat her heart with vain longing.

Then came down the torrent a something vast and bristly, looming across the wide stream, and at last clearly appearing to be a tree, hurled prone by some furious gust of the gale, washed out of its root-hold, and drifting down to the plains below this level country. Sometimes its
submerged

submerged branches caught upon the bottom and gripped the boulders there. Then the whole mass paused and heaved ponderously, until the water wrestled with it and pushed it off again. So it sailed past her very swiftly, rocking like a war-galley under a press of sail, with some small animal shrieking in its branches like a mariner watching for shoals. Presently it caught again lower down from the spot where she stood, and again the water boiled and hissed around the mass of its roots and the dome of its branches, vainly pushing as it poured past. A mighty tree was that, even in its fall. It must have been king of the crags and mountain-side when it stood, sheltering beast and bird with royal impartiality. But the outburst of waters had joined forces with the furious press of the storm-wind, until the tree yielded to the many shocks above and the continual sapping below, and fell, and rolled, and went down where the stream might choose to drag it.

As she looked at it heaving there, perhaps to be free again in an instant, a thought flashed through her, and she ran along the bank until she came opposite to the swaying branches and the chattering animal. Then she gave a great bound forward, and the current seized her and carried her against the outermost fringe of twigs, which she grasped instantly. By and by, as she made her way through the tangle and came to the trunk, along which she walked as on a causeway, the tree ceased its heaving and began to glide, slowly, then faster, faster, until the stream widened, and then the pace became less swift but steadier, and she sat down among the roots and waited, while the animal chattered and ran about in the branches at the other end.

She did not think now, for that was not her habit, and her decision having been made, there was no need for any more brain-beating. She would stay there until the tree had come down to where the towns began, and then she would leap off and swim to the right bank and make her way to her chieftain somehow, knowing that side of the plains sufficiently.

There were stones of various shapes among the roots, along with the torn-up mould and mosses, and choosing one of these, long and thin, she passed the time in sharpening the edge of her crooked blade and fingering its point, until this was like a razor and that was like a needle. Then she carefully sheathed it again and gazed around.

The mist was white and thick on the water, and she was not sure whether she had seen a watch-tower or a clump of trees before it passed behind her and was lost entirely. The river was in full flood, and went fast onward with much twisting and gurgle, so that the air all round her

her was murmuring with the thousands of small current-voices, and no human sounds came to her ear from the distant shores ; so that she could not tell where she might be, and the day was now nearing sunset-time. She sat and waited the first opportunity to get away and begin her quest of revenge. There were many other things in the water, pieces of soil half submerged, trees of a lesser size than hers, and by degrees had appeared a few bodies of cattle and some wild beasts, the latter alive, some of them fighting feebly, and yielding their lives reluctantly, though they had come from afar. Most had gripped a tree, and cowered among the branches, taking no notice of each other, whether they were friend or foe by race.

An hour passed, and more, and there came no chance of getting ashore, nor was any shore sign visible as the mist thickened and the dusk came. But now she saw that some human bodies had come floating into the strange company of voyagers, and tried hard to see if they wore the dress of her chieftain, any of them, not recognising it in the coarse clothes of the men nor deceived by the gold embroidery on one of them, for she saw that one to be a woman of some consequence, and this looked as if a town had been passed.

After a while the stream was crowded with dead folk, floating silently along, now turning up white faces, now showing only their backs. And at last she saw a dress she knew, and on that she fixed her eyes for a long while, until the face of the wearer slowly turned upward, and she recognised another man of her chieftain's troop.

It angered her greatly, yet gave her a sure tidings of the disaster which had overwhelmed the man she sought ; for the hands and feet of that corpse were bound, and the face was distorted with torture-marks, and there was no sign lacking of the things she herself had delighted to inflict on her lord's captives in merry days now gone never to return. She sat there in the dusk, hoping always for some opportunity, some tongue of land, so that she might get away and give burial as well as revenge. But no land showed, and at last came night, and she lay down and slept, with red dreams flowing through her.

She awoke at dawn, and the yellow mist had become white again, and the crowd around her was greater, but there was no sign of shore. A glance showed her many of her chieftain's men, who had joined the silent procession during the night hours, so many that now they outnumbered the others. Then she stood up on her tree and raised her hands and sang a lamentation for them, wild and shrill, with a voice tuned to the murmurous note of the river which bore them all along
unresting.

unresting. The animal chattered and ran about the tangle of boughs in front, but she paid no heed to it at all, only waved her hands and sang verse upon verse for her lost chieftain, who, perchance, might be there in the water with the rest.

At last came a sound which was not the river, and she ceased her song and listened to that mightier one. She knew it. The chant of sea-waves breaking upon the coast, rising and falling regularly on either side, as there came a sense of saltness in the air. They had come a long way, she and her men together, but the storm had been long and violent up there in the mountains, and had sent a vast tide down to meet the tides of ocean.

Another sound came to her for a little while also. A bell clanged on the coast, far, far away, ringing the news of victory and peace. It died presently as the current bore the silent company, and the voice of the sea grew louder in her ears.

At last the tree tossed and heaved as it had done far up behind on the higher levels, but there was no catch below. All the bodies tossed likewise, and surged around her upon the waves, and so they plunged onward through the sea, and the gulls flew screaming across and settled, and again arose and wheeled.

Then at last came a dragging of the under branches, and the tree was pushed forward into the breakers and rolled over, and the wife of the chieftain was in the water, fighting her way to the beach of the islet where they had stranded. She rose and sank and rose again, and at last came upon the sand and stones. There came also many bodies with her, and she stood and watched them for a while.

Then she threw off her mail and her helmet and went inward to the sand-dunes and found a hollow place, fit for the grave of a strong warrior, and prepared a deep furrow with stones and long grass, after which she returned and waited on the shore, and as each of her men arrived she drew him upon the shingle and laid him to wait his turn. At last came the body she desired, slowly floating inward with hands and feet unbound. She was glad then, and yet more glad to find the hilt of a broken blade clenched in the stiff fingers. And him she carried to the couch she had prepared, and poured sand over him from her helmet, until he was covered cleanly; and all the remainder of that day she spent in placing his men round him in order of their following, and at evening, her task done, she herself lay down to rest by the centre mound she had made.

W. DELAPLAINE SCULL.

ANCILLA DOMINI

SLEEP, dearest One,
 Oh ! sleep awhile
 Securely on Thy mother's breast !
 To-night no evil shall Thy peace molest :
 Brave angels guard Thee, faithful shepherds run
 To kneel in quiet watch. Ah ! my own Son,
 My helpless Babe, let slumbers deep beguile
 Thy sense into forgetfulness ! My Jesu, sleep !

How still the night !
 The virgin snow
 Hushes to silence every sound.
 The awestruck cattle even, that surround
 Thy cradle, scarcely stir. The soft moon's light
 Lies quiet o'er the world, enrobed in white
 For its Redeemer's birthday. Clear and low
 Thy lullaby, my Jesu, all creation breathes !

Sleep, Dearest, sleep !
 Thy mother's arm
 Is round Thee, and Thy mother's eyes
 Watch o'er Thy yielding to the new surprise
 Of that strange spell Thy love itself doth keep
 For Thy beloved. All Thy being steep
 This Thy first mortal night in slumber's calm !
 Refuse not, O my Jesu, Thine own anodyne !

See, His eyes close,
 He yields at length,
 As any infant ! Warm and flushed,
 My Darling nestles closer ! All is hushed :
 With one faint sigh He sinks into repose
 Complete ! But, ah ! no mortal prescience knows
 What presences of beauty and of strength
 Encompass Thy pure soul, my Jesu, in its home !

And

And must it be
 Indeed—that fate,
 Foretold upon the awful morn,
 When Gabriel spake, and on my soul was borne
 God's grace unutterable, o'ershadowing me?
 Oh! is there naught can save the agony,
 The shame, that here my spotless Babe await?
 Is there no price save this, my Jesu, may prevail?

Nay, but, O Lord,
 I yield my being
 Obedient to Thy purpose. Shake
 My soul in very fragments, only take
 My uttermost oblation! Be Thy word
 Wholly accomplished, though the bitter sword
 Drive through my quivering heart its anguish, seeing
 My Child, my Love, my God, my Jesus, crucified!

Thus in her soul
 Our Lady prayed
 On that first Christmas night:
 Whereon the Eternal sped from realms of light
 To us, that sat beneath the dire control
 Of hell and darkness. O great God, Thy whole
 Creation cried to Thee, and Love delayed
 No longer, nor withheld its priceless sacrifice!

SELWYN IMAGE

OF PURPLE JARS



It is against Infallible Parents, and chiefly the Perfect Mother, that I would fain take up my parable, albeit their ways are too wonderful for me, and past my finding out.

Wisdom is bound up in the heart of a child together with foolishness. The free, fearless mind of his fathers he inherits: their prejudices he has to be taught. Few and weak are the links of his reasoning, scanty his facts, absurd his logic; yet when he takes his first mental flights, he often swoops right down into the very heart of the truth, and that chiefly because such truth as he has espied is one which lies quite bare and on the surface, but which mature sapience has long ago decreed to be invisible. For this he is invariably reprov'd. He has posed his elders—children need not be argued with—they should be seen and not heard. So, believing not one syllable of imperious denial or disclaimer, he holds his peace, and forthwith looks out for such other secrets of this queer world as he may pry into—a watchful critic, obstinately storing up every new fact to confirm his tacit revolt, till the time comes, sooner or later, when by force or fraud the young rebel is subdued, or reconciled, to the wisdom of the majority. Then, learning with a new arrogance more suited to his growing years that his eyes are at last really opened to know good and evil, he embraces the consoling faith that all is for the best in this worst possible of worlds. Not till long afterwards, if ever at all, from such snug perch in the cage of life as he has managed to secure, does he look back and try to understand those childish beatings of the wings against the golden wires, then so strangely invisible to the fledgling in his eager gaze across the far, free world beyond—now, alas, so plain, so firm, so impassable. But all he can do now is to peck at the bars, not indeed with much hope of breaking them, but at least to spoil their gilding; nor in these days can the most perverse Irreconcilable, who from first to last has always been wholly on the children's side, hope to do much more. Fellow-prisoner! if you too have defied Conversion, and are in heart still blessedly Unregenerate, read on—we are friends!

Of all the pitfalls in the way of youth *fra le vane speranze e'l van dolore*, the Moral Tale would be the most dangerous, but that, except by stupid children, it is always profoundly suspect. Excellent Parents, Kind Aunts, Judicious Friends, commanded at least our guarded acquiescence

acquiescence, but the Moral Fabulist we rejected as a bare-faced, deliberate cheat. We knew—that is, we felt—it was all wrong and unjust and silly ; and what right-feeling child could feel it otherwise? With superb disdain he ignores the maxims of grown-up morality as clumsy plots to cajole him into a noiseless, manageable submission. But, after all, the despised Moralist does not go quite unavenged ; for in the inmost soul of the young enthusiast there will linger a shadowy, haunting suspicion of the great world as of a place all Aunts and Uncles and Schoolmasters, wherein it were well for a wise child not to be too candid, but rather to hold his peace. From that moment he becomes a true-born Englishman, jealously concealing his feelings, whether in self-respecting reserve or in hypocrisy, he least of all knows.

One of these well-meant Moralities has always strangely haunted me. On it I am going to dwell, and that, I fear, mostly in the first person, because so much of it is only my own imagining. Who wrote this dismal apologue of *The Purple Jar* I know not, nor care. Not, I trust, Sancta Maria Edgeworth, than whom few hold higher place in my last-revised Calendar. Nor need I go hunt in the Bodleian, for, though I dare say I shall tell the story all wrong, the only version which concerns me is that which has grown in my memory through long years, from the days when we gathered it with much painful poring and spelling from an obsolete sheepskin volume—the ‘Third Class Reader,’ I think it was called, but to us irreverent urchins known familiarly as the ‘Silly Book.’ There it was printed as a parable of Youth’s folly and Age’s wisdom : we, alas ! read it as a true tale of outraged innocence and cold-blooded treachery.

The first scene is a street. Rosamond and her admirable Mamma are on their way to the shoemaker’s. Our little heroine is sadly down at heel, and Mamma with her usual beneficence is going to buy her a nice, strong pair of boots. But as Rosamond trips along, prattling of boots and gratitude as inoffensively as any utilitarian parent could wish, suddenly there flashes on her a strange, glorious, entrancing radiance—the veritable purple light of youth itself. I suppose the chemist had just lit his gas, or more likely his candles, and there it stood proudly, the beautiful Purple Jar—its ample body one great disc of imperial splendour, its shoulders curving so graciously up to the pale lilac delicacy of its neck, and crowned with its tiara of pure, glittering crystal. Among its fellows of azure, gules and vert it shone forth, the queen of all—the fairest, because the rarest. For remember, in our day there was no blazing, acrid aniline ; our old indigo and madder

violets were dull and sombre, in fact what we called elderly colours. Even among our sweatmeats the violet specimens were by far the fewest, and therefore the most highly prized. So to poor Rosamond this shapely pyramid of ruddy purple, its translucent gleam, its plenteous mass, was something entirely novel. What can she do but gaze, and gaze, and long with all a child's yearning for instant possession? A yearning of pure, admiring love; for already her very heart-strings are twining about it, and if only it shall be hers, be sure that when Mamma and Laura have gone up to dress, the little arms will creep round it with a passionate hug, and the warm cheek be pressed against its poor, cold, insensible sides, and breathless lips shower kisses and murmured caresses as of a young mother, mingled with a lover's triumph—'And now, Purple Jar, you are all my very own!' What though Mr. Pestle is frowning through the tooth-brushes, and Mamma warning her that she has dropped her muff, and commencing that old, old lecture on the vulgarity of staring—Rosamond's thoughts are other where; she pants for the blissful days in store glorified by this talisman of felicity—she shudders to think what life must be without it. Those who have forgotten the quick sensations of childhood may call this exaggerated. I did not feel it so then; I cannot think it so now. I know how heroic was the resolve with which in her imperious need the child conquered the supreme delicacy which bars a foolish petition, and boldly faced her Mamma with a request for the purchase of the Jar.

Now this Mamma was not only an admirable, but a good—a very good woman. She loved her child, but somewhat, I fear, as her child loved the Jar, with an inward whisper now and then, 'She is all my own, my very own.' In all her life Mrs. Barlow—for so I have always somehow named her—had never wished for anything that was not clearly and lawfully obtainable, or which was not also wished for by the other Mrs. Bensons and Goodchilds of story; or if once she too had longed for the improper, she had very properly forgotten all about it. Really most untoward! to think that any child of hers! such preposterous inclinations! this must be nipped in the bud. So turning with her sweet, wise smile to the flushing suppliant, she speaks—*à propos des bottles*. The Useful she will munificently bestow, but the Beautiful 'she cannot possibly afford.' Not that I have ever doubted that she had been very genteelly left by Mr. Barlow, or that she had always felt it her duty to live well within her income, but of course, if once the children suspect your means, they will hardly worship you
for

§ THE GENIUS OF GREEK POETRY
by
George Frederick Watts, R.A.



for taking them to the Polytechnic, and you lose a precious opportunity of inculcating gratitude. So Rosamond, with a vague sense of Mamma's financial embarrassments and of the vast, ungrudging sacrifice involved in those long-promised and much-talked-of boots, is penetrated by a great shame. But, alas! is there no escape? can she let it go? If Mamma can only afford one will she please buy the jar—it is so big and all of such lovely purple glass. 'Purple glass!' repeats Mamma with a flash of inspiration. She sees her way now, this Excellent Parent! Has not a beautiful Providence expressly placed ignorance as a bit between the teeth of youth, whereby we may drive them as we will? Does it not lay a thousand snares and pitfalls, whereby their little hopes and joys may be turned back upon them as suicidal weapons, and all things work mightily together for the inculcation of Moral Lessons? And shall she, wise in the example of poor dear Mr. Barlow, and in the lore of Mme. de Genlis and the *Parent's Instructor*, be wanting to this Providential opportunity? Surely no! she is an Admirable Mamma—she loves her child—she knows her duty—*she will lay a trap.*

So they step into the shop, and by a transparent collusion between Mr. Pestle and Mamma it appears that the price of the Jar is just that of the boots. And now Rosamond may choose the good and eschew the evil as best seemeth her; but first, from a scrupulous respect for fair dealing and possibly also to barb the stings of future remorse, Mamma will place the issue clearly before her. Preluding briefly on parental infallibility and passive obedience she points out how lasting and substantial are the pleasures of boots as compared to those of the Jar. Observe that she does not call it the *Purple Jar*; that would be a story, for she knows that it is not purple at all, but of course she is not bound to mention this. She merely advises; she wishes Rosamond to choose freely; only, if she choose the Jar, she must make her old boots last another month; for till then Mamma will not be able to afford new ones. Rosamond is a little frightened by these solemn judicial proceedings, but she is very brave. Seeing all the sacrifice, she accepts it gladly. In vain does Mamma goad her with the thought of walks to Rose Hill and Primrose Wood, for mark her answer—'I shall not mind that at all; for when you are gone, I can set my Jar on the table, and put flowers in it, and look at it, and then I shall never be lonely; besides a month will soon be over, but I shall have my beautiful Jar always.' O most unaccountable and disconcerting of children! O poor, poor Mrs. Barlow of the soft, flaxen braids

braids and sweet wise smile, well may you wonder, you dear, dull, English matron! and would wonder more if you knew all! For what your child sees is no mere paltry chemist's bottle but the divine illusions of Art and Beauty; that eager, quivering voice is more than childish petulance,—it is the faint birth-cry of the very spirit of the archangels, of Michael and of Raphael. Well, well! smile on sweetly and wisely—thou hast thy trap.

So the die is cast, the Jar is to be sent home, and as Rosamond in pure gratitude nestles for a moment in the big sable boa, whose mingled odour of preservative camphor and natural vermin she will associate to her dying day with maternal goodness, be sure that no qualm flutters the well-regulated heart beneath it. I am not so sure that Mr. Pestle, sneering sarcastic therapist as he was, did not feel a little uneasy, for perhaps he had a little Frederick of his own, who came in sometimes to help Papa roll the pills, and who, though he scorned the secret of the Purple Jar, held other pretty delusions which Pestle would not for all the world destroy.

I cannot paint the walk home, its terrible slowness, the fever, the sickening longing when Mamma *would* stop to look into those tiresome toy and picture shops—O cunning, didactic Mamma!—and all the time the prolonged savour of the coming certainty. Good Heavens! how the child ran on, and what nonsense! how she clung to Mamma's hand, and how hard it was for her not to jump up and kiss her again and again before the whole street in a perfect riot of love and trustfulness!

And, lo! the Jar already arrived and on the table, and in front of it Laura, impassive as ever—is she of flesh and blood? calmly drawing. Of course she was drawing—they were always drawing, these terrible Lauras. Why, I can see the very picture, the tottering column and broken arch on the left crowned with vague twiggery, the glossy blackness in the mouldings and capital—with what furtive and ladylike discretion used Laura to moisten the pencil tip—the deformed traveller and two trees on the right—they are beeches, so the pencil goes, jog, jog—had they been chestnuts it would have gone jag, jag, scrape, according to the rules of that black art called 'tree-touches.' And when Laura has shaded and stippled and finicked, and smudged it all over except the salivated shadows with the leather stump, she will have done her worst, and then it will be for Mr. Touchup to spend a *mauvais quart d'heure* over it, and lay on those bold masses of Chinese white and bathe the thing in isinglass. And at last, tastily framed in seaweed

Laura

Laura will preserve it with just pride, and I dare say if you ask her next time you are at Clapham, the old lady will show it you in the spare bedroom, and tell you how she had been considered to have a very remarkable talent for drawing, 'but that of course, my dear, was before my marriage.'

Need I say that Rosamond was never suspected of such talent, and so was not allowed to learn, though she pleaded hard enough, and was always scrawling in her rough, ridiculous way. For, you see, she had no patience, and as Touchup said, 'Patience is so ab-so-lute-ly essential.' So she can only loyally admire Laura's masterpieces, and plan what pretty things she would draw if only she knew how. As for working out her own way, please, remember that in those far-off days it was *læsa majestas* to attempt anything without 'proper instruction,' and that our infallible guardians settled among themselves what we were, and what we could, or could not do. John chopped the frog's leg off and so must make a good surgeon, and Joseph a parson, because he was shocked and told Papa. Jane was destined for literature, because in her dull apathy she liked the playground no better than the schoolroom, and Clara doomed to the harp, because her taste was really so beautiful, and her arm—this in a whisper—as elegant as Mamma firmly believed her own to have once been. Had Rosamond cultivated a talent which she had been 'distinctly told' she did not possess, Mrs. Barlow would have been all aghast at her presumption, and Laura's laughing, 'O you dear, ridiculous, clumsy, little thing!' would have smothered the kindling spark of genius. For a genius I am afraid she was in her childish way, this little sister, as even Laura may have been too before she left off frilled trousers. But now, since among the objects which young ladies may and should admire, druggists' bottles were certainly never even so much as mentioned at Acacia Lodge, she draws on unmoved.

I wish my story were done, for the little tragedy which that cruel horse-hair couch, and the false, blear-eyed mirror, and the gaunt piano, with its flaring red silk stomacher gathered up by the big brass brooch, must so keenly have relished that day, I like not to tell. Just a few whose real, grown-up sorrows have not quite effaced the scars of their first disillusion, may sigh to read, but the many will only laugh, and well perhaps for them that they can. They have no patience with children's fancies—if the girl begins to cry, let her be sent to bed at once. Even Mrs. Barlow herself could say no more. As she watched Rosamond's delight, I think she was exquisitely happy. Her trap is
about

about to spring, and the joyous chirping of the little bird to be turned into piteous cries of despair. O! that demure cruelty of the Woman and the Ecclesiastic! where in all this wicked world is there anything so fell?

And whereunto shall I liken it? If you are a Barlow, you will wonder how I can have forgotten what all the best Barlows have settled long ago, that the proper illustration of cruelty is a cat playing with a mouse, and not an Admirable Mamma tormenting her child. But I fancy that when Mrs. Barlow watched—as I dare say she often did with a certain scandalised fascination—poor Tabby's barbarous antics—the caressing pats, the guileless complacency, the fatal springs—she entered unconsciously into the sport, and constructed out of her own instincts a pretty intelligible set of feelings, which having transferred to the account of Puss, she could safely call cruelty. My own notion—perhaps it is wrong—is that Puss is debarred by Providence, not only from the luxury of cruelty, but even from the high human zest of sport, and that she is merely practising those exercises of vigilance and dexterity on which her livelihood depends, profoundly unconscious that mice can feel. It is we alone, to whom it is given to probe and realise the feelings of our fellows, who can really enjoy their sufferings—who can perversely delight to trouble the repose, to lacerate the heart, to reopen the old wounds, and all in pure, selfish love. I hold very cheap my first forefather, the old, arboreal, anthropoid Nondescript, and would shoot and stuff him without remorse if I found him surviving in some desert island, but all the same I see that his children have not escaped the curses of over-domestication—perversion of instinct and morbidity of feeling.

But Mrs. Barlow's mind at that moment offers a problem so complicated, that I dare only glance at its most obvious feature—that quintessential savour, that unalloyed delight—the triumph of the inferior over the superior mind. Mediocrity is intensely jealous. As my dear old Voltairean friend used to say of our Curé in her grand First-Empire tones, '*C'est un homme très borné. Il haït partout la supériorité. Voilà pourquoi il me déteste!*' Not indeed that poor Rosamond boasted a superior mind, nor, I fear, as yet much mind at all, but only some vague, instinctive yearnings for higher things, which Mrs. Barlow either did not feel or did not cultivate, and which therefore she pronounced to be wholly improper. Among all the strange dealings of old and young which I see going on around me, this crass, maternal jealousy puzzles me most. I often hear the man in his big, self-depreciatory tone,

tone, as of one whose sins after all sit not so badly upon him, hope that Jack will make a better man than his father, but I never heard Mamma breathe a similar prayer over dear Louisa. The better a woman is, the more gigantic and more sincere is her self-admiration and self-belief; and the more subtly does she veil in devotion to *her* husband, *her* children, this supreme devotion to self. The Excellent Mamma—and truly excellent she is—has but one type of excellence—herself. Her child must parody her virtues, think her thoughts, wear her chains, live her life, and, losing all individuality, be gradually absorbed into the Nirvana of Mamma. Alas! that we cannot all be excellent in the same way! Every aspiration to perfections which are not hers is a tacit insult to the mother's infallibility. Nay, I sometimes fancy that in the obedient, responsive machinery of Mrs. Barlow's conscience there must have lurked a distressing suspicion that all this high-flown Jar nonsense somehow took the bloom off her prosaic Boot-theory, and thrust the moralist down to lower ground. Heroism—the very shadow of heroism—is an exasperation to the unheroic.

So there was probably just a touch of benevolent spite to heighten the zest of her Spartan morality. Rosamond shall see what comes of knowing better than Mamma, when she discovers how finely she has been deceived. Deceived? but by whom? Hem! well, we need not go into that, but smoothe our lappets, and fumble in the reticule, and practise our best smile, for already the child is calling out, 'Oh, it is full of nasty, black stuff! May I not pour this away?' Jane shall fetch a bucket. In grave silence (Jane has her cue) she tilts the Jar—Laura kisses her pencil in knowing amusement—Mamma fixes the chosen vessel with a mysterious stare—what *can* they all mean?—and with gurgling sobs the doctor's stuff is pouring, pouring forth, and with it all the child's delight. Amazement—dismay—the numbness of first grief—desolation complete—then the fiery pang of outraged justice and the shrill, resentful cry—'But, Mamma, you never told me of this!'

What kind, improving things Mrs. Barlow said I cannot repeat, for this was just the part of the story I never remembered. Nor do I think that Rosamond was as submissively attentive as she seemed, so absorbed was she in weeping and self-pity. Dear, amiable Laura of course cried too, susceptible to the infection of tears, but Mamma, gravely jubilant, did not cry, nor did Jane, for in her eyes her kind, just mistress could do no wrong; but when she was safe back in her kitchen, I dare say she sighed hugely over her kneading trough, and owned that perhaps Madam was just a bit hard sometimes, though to be sure Miss Rosy

was fearful aggravating and not a bit like the other young ladies, but always such a one for anything pretty. So Jane—God speed her loving, clumsy hands!—falls to work to fashion a dough pig with currant eyes and caraway bristles, and when she goes to tuck up her darling, she will carry it up hot in her apron, and Rosamond shall munch the toothsome statuary, and be comforted.

The rest of the tale has faded quite away, except how the authoress gloated like a ghoul over the tribulations of that weary month; how during the next morning walk Rosamond was always lagging behind to pull up her slipshod shoes, and was forthwith interned in the house as altogether too disreputable for public view; sentenced for one calendar month—no Primrose Wood, no going to tea at Mrs. Goodchild's, or to hear Harriet Benson's new bird organ, but to sit always, always at home—O impatient little feet and fingers that drum the window pane!—alone, with no company but the poor, pale, colourless Jar. Let us fervently hope that the dancing bears always came round just at those very times, and the fantoccini, and the courtly old signor with his poodles, and Punch's show, and the little Auvergnat with a waxen Solomon's Judgment in his box and the white mice peeping out of his sleeve—his flashing smile and kind eyes such a vision of ragged felicity that even Jane relents, and against all rules permits bread, nay even cake, to be carried out to him, and Rosamond, flighty little puss! feels that if he *really* were the Marquis of Carabas in disguise, she would gladly trudge with him, slipshod or barefoot, and carry Solomon through the wide world till they reached his father's kingdom. All these brave shows, I trust, passed before the prison window, and that Laura missed them every one.

Whether Mrs. Barlow relented I know not, nor how the tale ended, nor even how long it was. If, when you have searched the archives of the nursery, it should turn out to be after all no more than three or four pages of big print, believe that I have but told a part of the full version as I held it, and hold it still. Its whole import has grown upon me gradually, but from the very first there was never a doubt that Rosamond was entirely right, and her Mother entirely wrong, or that a black deed of stupidity and injustice had been done. Dear lady, best of Moral Fabulists, your tale has in spite of you told some truths to which you yourself were stone-blind—the child's barbaric, untrained, yet holy admiration of beauty such as he sees it; his vast yearning for possession—no mere sordid acquisitiveness, but the thirst for realising, for identifying his soul with the thing admired by the nearness of secure ownership;

ownership ; his faith in the universal Utopia ; his choice—sadly wrong no doubt, but for all that truly heroic—of the Beautiful before the Useful ; all those childish things which seem ever pleading to us, '*Ne brutalises pas la machine !*'—which we parents and pedagogues, calling them delusions, trample in our dust.

Can all this, it will be said, refer to the sordid, gluttonous little animals one meets in the holidays ? No indeed ! nor yet to those effeminate manikins in slashed velvet and Florentine barrets who early learn to lisp the Correggiosity of Correggio. I am only speaking of the average English child of gentle birth, pure blood and healthy instinct, before we have made him ashamed of his better feelings, and equipped him for the coarse, great world by the far coarser world of school. Such children do of their own free will betray a genuine love of beautiful things and an honest readiness to sacrifice to them their grosser desires. The elements of this childish sense of beauty need not here be analysed ; enough that it rests mainly on three grounds. First, smallness ; partly connected with delicacy and fineness, but much more with the patronising, protecting love of pets. That the child has any true sense of the grandiose is a common error—bigness he admires partly as a sign of force in sympathy with his own ebullient energies, partly from mere greedy preference of what is largest and most for the money. The other elements are bright colour, and, most important of all, rarity. Given these most inadequate grounds, the child does undoubtedly discriminate, appreciate and admire ; and these active feelings do, or rather might, form a large and wholesome element in his early life. But our good parents, and we too I fear in our own day, must have it otherwise. The children admire the wrong things—their taste is really deplorable—what on earth can they know about it ? Hush, dear ! Papa does not like to be teased about such rubbish ! He has risen above Purple Jars.

Well, I am no Parent's Instructor to give advice, but only grief and wonder and scolding. For of all the moon-rakers and sand-rope-weavers on this foolish planet the most pitiful and the most hopeless to my thinking are the Judicious Parents. How they love their little dolls ! how they tyrannise over them ! how careful they are not to spoil them ! how entirely they do spoil and mar them for any aim in life higher than their own ! How patiently do they mould and smoothe and pat and thump the rebellious little clay models, investing them with some strange merit of incongruous age and sobriety ! what rejoicing over the neat, easily managed automata
when

when quite finished! what woe unspeakable when at times the young Adam breaks out! Strangest of all, that blind confidence in the child's credulity, a confidence undisturbed by the faintest recollection of the parents' own infant scepticism. Beautiful it is, this parental affection, because it rests on instinct; grotesque, because that instinct is perverted—a veritable *chinoiserie* of love. Such, too, are its masterpieces—nature so overlaid with minutest art that the nature is well nigh lost; all beauty of material jealously effaced by cunning handicraft. And then all is well; the artificer happily unconscious that under his strenuous hand are being crushed the purest charms and the sweetest graces—that the child's sensuous instinct buds forth in exuberant welcome to the wealth of Nature, as a young fig-tree which, pruned unkindly, bleeds to death. But why not indeed? Let it die, this rank, useless growth, and plant we our leeks and onions in its place, dear to mature palates! And so it comes about that only the poor *réfractaire*, who in his intense Conservatism is always finding himself on the Extreme Left with impracticables and irreconcilables, remains to cherish in silence the supreme reproof of all pedagogy, the watchword of all goodly nurture, 'Suffer little children to come, and forbid them not.'

As children they come, with a child's sweet, foolish wisdom, foolish dreams, supremely foolish longings—come to us standing outside the doors of a poor pantomime Paradise, where we too once were happy, which never more shall we re-enter; into our woeful world we drag them to make them even as ourselves. I know well that in this hard, ugly world are weaving epics and tragedies and idylls of love and sacrifice, beside which all fairyland and the grand transformation scene itself are as shabby tinsel; but these, alas, the child cannot see. For him the lust of the eye and the pride of life are no Satanic snares, but the unspeakable gift of God. We may blindfold the eager gaze, if we like, but it will never brighten again at our bidding; cramp and fetter the wayward life, and yet it shall never be as ours. Why then forbid young eyes to see their full in all beauty—even beauty to us poor and false? lest peradventure the very desire of seeing should fade out ere the sight wax dim. Mr. Ruskin indeed has said that Art is not for children, but rather fresh air and food and nature. But then by Art, we usually mean so much that is really Nature, so much that can best rouse and warm a child's soul, which is capable of no higher passion than loving admiration. The whole domain of child-land is swayed by this beneficent lust of the eye, this exquisite delight of the young stranger in a world so full of beautiful surprises. Yet which of us has
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the loving courage to take him by the hand, and lead him all through the raree show, and stop to stare at all the pitiful, make-believe marvels, and not by one sneer or yawn poison his delight, or turn his joy to shame? But unless we can stoop to this, we shall hardly train his eye to any power of eager sight with all our Art Schools and Museums and Academies, but rather, I fear, dim and extinguish it. What such wholesome training should be, what are the sweet uses of Purple Jars, so far as I know them, must here be left unsaid, but, believe me, they are many and potent.

More and worse remains. For the story tells not only of a wilful darkening of the seeing eye, but of deliberate and treacherous misleading of the blindfolded. Of such sort is much of our home discipline. It seems so much easier to the Excellent Parent to convince by deception than by argument or persuasion or authority. The end is no doubt gained—the tiresome child silenced, the tired parent at ease. But meanwhile a wrong, a calamity, a crime has been perpetrated, so irreparable that the Infallible herself would stand aghast thereat, were she not infallible. For, little as she knows it, the smooth, pure ice of moral rectitude and maternal perfection on which hitherto she has glided so superbly before the eyes of her young admirers, has broken under her, and, alas! by her own fault. No longer will she steer her calm, majestic course, but rather flounder dismally and shamefully—strange object of wonderment and misgiving and heart searching to the disillusioned worshipper. Once for all she has been found out. The child no longer believes her mother—whom then will she believe? For the scepticism of children is a disbelief, not in God, but in the Parent; the religion of love once discarded, the young infidel loves henceforth, if at all, with mere brute instinct. Is this a light harm? With the loftiest professions the superior, in pretending to raise the inferior mind, has stooped to fraud, treachery and cruelty. From that instant the whole conspiracy of education is seen through as a bungling plot to inveigle children into paths which are not those of peace and pleasantness for themselves, but of ease and self-seeking for their instructors. To us the end may justify the means; in their eyes the means damns the end. The bubble has burst; the Purple Jar is drained of its fairy splendour. Virtue becomes the monster which, to be hated, needs but to be seen through the pedagogic camera—hated because it is unconsciously felt to war against the soul, and rob life of its just delights—hated as only hypocrisy, cant, and pretence can be hated by the pure-hearted and hot-headed. Mournful as it seems, this, more or less, is
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the burden of the cry from many a model English nursery. To such a pass have all our long-suffering, deeply planned strivings brought us—the parents' utilitarian morality inculcated by trickery, enforced by oppression, and therefore never cordially adopted—the child's unconscious love of right and hate of wrong, his simple enthusiasm, his sensitive honour, his shrinking delicacy, all crushed and wounded beyond healing.

O kind Papas and Mammias of story! I fear me that after all there is little kindness in you. If yours be love, I know not what is this I feel for your victims. Crabbed Age and Youth cannot dwell together—their joys and griefs are too far apart, nay often clean opposed—yet from time to time a sweet and wholesome converse may hold them a while together on the same path. There is in all of us a *retour de jeunesse*, or rather a survival of childhood, a relighting of smouldering fires, which accords not ill with simple, youthful gladness; the sweet, momentary seriousness of the child is strangely attuned to our habitual gravity. It is when at their best, most simple, most earnest, most sequestered from the shameful world, that the child and the man are really at one, that they can interchange their gifts, that mirth may be given for wisdom, gladness for guidance, peace for strength. In this hopeless *impasse*, this universal loss of human contentment to which we have brought the world, this strange medley of luxury and woe, it seems almost as if the children alone have kept the power of pure enjoyment. For us it remains mostly to share their pleasure as best we may, or at least not to spoil it.

Ah, Rosamunda! little wild rose, opening so pure and fresh to joy thee in the boon air and merry sun, let other hands than mine, more stern, more self-certain, dash the dew from thy bright cheek and mangle thy pretty vesture, and train thee to the prim perfection of my lady's garden. For I too have been young—have laughed and played and sighed, and have not forgotten. As my comrades, trooping to death along the high road of success and fame, leave me behind, fain would I linger yet awhile among the young and brave, mingling with the merry crew to cheer on their games and faintly echo their glee, consoling little griefs and laughing away transient pains, nor seek, as fond fools may, some measured return of gratitude. But thou, little dream-child, I know, art not ungrateful, nor ungracious. What though they are all against us? we are brave; we are strong; we are two against the world! Has Mamma taken Laura to Primrose Wood and left thee to disenchantment and the Purple Jar? Then together we will revive the broken spell. Let us away from the town beyond the last ugly villa,
and

90 PORTRAIT OF J. K. HUYSMANS
by
Will Rothenstein



and roam the fair river-meads, where you shall ask a thousand eager questions, and I, a very Solomon in your eyes, will tell of all trees and flowers and glad living things we see, till the gleam of the waters and the rush of the breeze and the green glorious growth beneath us shall call laughing music to your lips, and to mine some echo of long silent harmonies. Then back we will trudge, spoil-laden ; for the poor, forlorn old Jar shall have his share in our festivity. And when we have crowned him with reeds and poppies and meadow-sweet and tall golden flags, and girdled his gleaming bosom with ivy and bindweed, he shall stand transfigured—no longer a poor Purple Jar, foolishly worshipped for an hour, then wantonly despised, but the selfsame Crystal Vase that eternally droops its sprays over the couch of the Sleeping Beauty. And thou, dear child, to whom all fairyland and its wonders are familiar, wilt know it again at once, and clap thy hands in returning pride and admiration, and, half-believing, thank the old magician for his charm.

But already Mamma has returned, not at all put out by our escapade, indeed vastly complaisant, and as usual quite delighted—guileless Rosy can never make out why—that Uncle John should take so much notice of her little girl, and invite her to tea, and—*of course* she may go, if he is *quite* sure she will not be *too* troublesome. So off we march to hold high banquet on sweet forbidden dainties from dishes which have each a history, and Rosamond shall marvel for the hundredth time at my pots and pans and graven images many and outlandish, and shall even handle my chiefest treasure, which no mortal housemaid may touch and live, the vase of old emerald crackle smothered with gouts and tears of foaming enamel. And then, after due pressing, I consent to unlock the old corner cupboard where sleep Aunt Cynthia's dolls—so tenderly used, so carefully laid by, poor soul ! for the children she never lived to bear ; and beside them the tiny pink jockey cap and miniature spurs in which the Archdeacon won on Beelzebub ; and on the top shelf all that survive of the Chinese toys, Indian gods, and other dear-bought rubbish which the poor Admiral used to bring home for Susan's brats. Perhaps we shall play a little at one of the stupid, obsolete games we find in the drawer, which are not such bad fun after all, at least for Rosamond who always wins, or reconstruct one or two old picture-puzzles, or read some more about the robins in Dame Trimmer's incomparable story. And when we have put everything away neatly in its proper place—for Mamma's golden maxims must not be openly discredited—we fall to talk, and that neither patronising monologue nor vacant chatter, for

the subject changes so suddenly, arguments so illogical and novel, questions so startling and insoluble are sprung upon the Oracle, that he feels he is on his mettle and his reputation at stake. Our discourse is no doubt absurdly serious, for small skill have I and still less heart to parry or wound young questioners by banter and mockery ; likely enough we shall get all wrong and talk sad nonsense. But old Fatima will not mind that, as she poses on her tiger-rug—a motionless, vaguely outlined form blurred in a nimbus of fluffy whiteness, with tasselled ears and eyes unfathomable, the embodied Spirit of Discretion—for she was brought up on the knees of an Ambassador, has sat in Congresses, and smeared with indolent tail the signatures of a Great Treaty ; to her after a youth of protocols and pourparlers all speech is but a human purr. And after all what care we if cat or king be listening ? For in perfect simplicity we will talk only of beautiful and joyous things, the child weaving her wildest, silliest fancies, and because we both believe in all goodness and fairyland, I would not for the world check her, but, so far as I may, gently lead her bright enthusiasm to dwell on such sweet verities of life and nature as she can best understand, and I most revere.

Ah me ! how fast the time has flown ! Hark ! it is Jane, with pattens and lantern, come to fetch home her charge. Good-night, Rosamond ! little dream-guest of my failing hearth ! good-night ! brave, trustful English children, all of you ! To your dreams ! to your dreams ! and may they every one come true !

EDWARD PURCELL.

THE LAGGARD KNIGHT

Too late ! The mighty dragon's crest of gold
 Lies cloven on the cavern's sparry floor ;
 And flameless now the throat whence never more
 Shall blighting fume on blast of fire be rolled.
 But he, my Friend, lies lifeless—in his hold
 The venom'd tongue his dying valour tore
 For triumph's token—with the monster's gore
 Sanguine, and stifled in its scaly fold.
 And diamond and emerald lie blent
 The ruby and the amethyst amid ;
 And treasury is mine more opulent
 Than catacomb e'er stored, or pyramid ;
 But, ah ! the deed illustrious I meant
 Rebukes the deed inglorious I did.

R. GARNETT

QUEEN YSABEAU

By COUNT VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM Translated by A. TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

The Keeper of the Palace of Books said : ' Queen Nitocris, the Fair One with the Rosy Cheeks, widow of Papi I. of the Tenth Dynasty, to avenge the murder of her brother, invited the conspirators to sup with her in an underground hall of her Palace of Aznac. Then, leaving the hall, she suddenly caused it to be flooded with the waters of the Nile.'—MANETHON.



N or about the year 1404—I go back so far lest I should distress my contemporaries—Ysabeau, wife to King Charles VI. and Regent of France, abode in Paris at the old Hôtel Montagu, a royal residence better known as the Hôtel Barbette.

There they planned the famous torchlight jousting-parties on the Seine—gala nights, concerts, banquets, made marvellous by the beauty of the women and the young nobles, and by the unequalled luxury displayed by the Court.

The Queen had introduced those gowns *à la gore* in which the bosom glanced through a network of ribands enriched with precious stones, and those tall head-dresses which required that the centre-pieces of the feudal gates should be raised by several cubits. In the daytime the meeting-place of the courtiers was near the Louvre, in the great hall and upon the terrace of orange-trees of Messire Escabala, the King's steward. Play ran high there, and at times the dice were cast for stakes large enough to starve a province. They dissipated the wealth of treasure which the thrifty Charles V. had been at such pains to amass. As the coffers diminished, the tithes, tolls, statute-tasks, aids, subsidies, seizures, exactions, and gabels were increased at will. Joy reigned in every heart.

It was in those days, also, that John of Nevers, sullen, standing aloof, making ready to abolish all those hateful taxes in his own States—John of Nevers, Knight, Lord of Salines, Count of Flanders and Artois, Count of Nevers, Baron of Réthel, Palatine of Mechlin, twice Peer of France and Premier Peer, cousin to the King, a soldier destined to be named by the Council of Constance the *sole* leader of armies who might be obeyed blindly without fear of excommunication, Premier Grand Feudatory of the Realm, first subject of the King (who himself is but the first subject of the nation), Hereditary Duke of Burgundy, the future hero of Nicopolis and of the victory of Hesbaie, in which,
deserted

deserted by the Flemings, he gained the heroic title of *The Fearless* in presence of the whole army by delivering France from her principal enemy—it was in those days, I was saying, that the son of Philip the Bold and Margaret II., that John the Fearless, in a word, first began to think of saving the country and of defying with fire and sword Henry of Derby, Earl of Hereford and Lancaster, fifth of the name, King of England—he who, when a price was put upon his head by that King, was declared a traitor by France, by way of all thanks.

Awkward attempts were for the first time made to play at cards, which had since a few days been imported by Odette de Champ-d'Hiver. Wagers of all kinds were made. They drank wines that came from the finest slopes of the Duchy of Burgundy. The ring was heard of the Tenzons, the Virelays of the Duke of Orleans, one of the Knights of the Fleurs-de-Lys who doted most upon beautiful rhymes. They discussed fashions and armour ; often sang dissolute couplets.

Bérénice Escabala, the daughter of that man of wealth, was a charming child, and exceeding fair to look upon. Her virgin smile attracted the most brilliant of the swarm of noblemen. It was notorious that she extended to all indifferently the same gracious reception.

One day it happened that a young lord, the Vidame of Maulle, who was then Queen Ysabeau's favourite, rashly pledged his word (after drinking, assuredly !) that he would triumph over the inflexible innocence of this daughter of Master Escabala ; in short, that she should be his within an approximate time.

This boast was hazarded in the midst of a group of courtiers. Around them stirred the laughter and the refrains of the time ; but the hubbub did not drown the young man's reckless phrase. The wager was accepted to the clinking of wine-cups, and came to the ears of Louis of Orleans.

Louis of Orleans, brother-in-law to the Queen, had been distinguished by her, in the early days of the Regency, with a passionate affection. He was a brilliant and frivolous prince, but of most evil omen. Between him and Ysabeau of Bavaria were certain parities of nature which likened their adultery to incest. Beside the capricious aftermath of a withered love, he was still able to command in the Queen's heart a sort of bastard attachment more of the nature of a compact than of sympathy.

The Duke kept a watch upon the favourites of his sister-in-law. When the lovers' intimacy seemed to threaten the influence which he was determined to retain over the Queen, he showed little scruple in
the

the means he employed to produce between them a rupture which was nearly always tragic. He would even stoop to play the informer.

And thus he took care that the observation aforesaid was carried to the Vidame of Maulle's royal paramour.

Ysabeau smiled, jested at the remark, and seemed to give it no further thought.

The Queen had her seers, who sold her the secrets of the East, potent to feed the flame of the desires she inspired. A new Cleopatra, she was a tall, listless woman, fashioned to preside over courts of love in some remote manor, or to set the mode to a province, rather than to plan how to free the soil of the country from the English. On this occasion, however, she consulted none of her seers—not even Arnaut Guilhem, her alchemist.

One night, not long after, the Lord of Maulle was with the Queen at the Hôtel Barbette. The hour was late; the fatigue of their pleasure was lulling the two lovers to sleep.

Suddenly Monsieur de Maulle seemed to hear, within Paris, the sound of bells tolled with infrequent and solemn strokes.

He started.

'What is that?' he asked.

'Nothing. . . . Let it be! . . . ' replied Ysabeau playfully, and without opening her eyes.

'Nothing, my fair Queen? . . . Is it not the tocsin?'

'Yes . . . perhaps. . . . Well, my love, and then?'

'There must be a house on fire.'

'I was just dreaming of it,' said Ysabeau.

The fair sleeper's lips parted in a smile of pearls.

'And more,' she continued; 'in my dream, it was you who had lighted it. I saw you fling a torch into the oil and fodder cellars, sweet heart.'

'Me?'

'Yes! . . . ' (She drawled the syllables languidly.) 'You were burning the house of Messire Escabala, my steward, you know, to win your wager of the other day.'

The Lord of Maulle half opened his eyes, seized with vague distrust.

'What wager? Are you not asleep yet, beautiful angel mine?'

'Why, your wager that you would be the lover of his daughter, little Bérénice, who has such beautiful eyes! . . . Oh! what a sweet and pretty child, is she not?'

'What are you saying, dear Ysabeau?'

'Do you not understand me, my lord? I was dreaming, I said, that
you

you had set fire to my steward's house to carry off his daughter during the conflagration, and make her your mistress, and win your wager.'

The Vidame looked about him in silence.

The glare from a lowering distance lighted up the window-panes of the chamber; purple reflections tinged with blood the ermine of the royal bed; the lilies on the escutcheons and those breathing their last in vases of enamel blushed red! And red, also, were the two goblets, upon a credence-table laden with wines and fruits.

'Ah! I remember . . . ' murmured the young man. 'It is true; I wished to draw the attention of the courtiers towards that little one in order to divert them from our happiness! . . . But see, Ysabeau; it is really a great fire . . . and the flames rise from the direction of the Louvre!'

At these words the Queen raised herself upon her elbow, silently and very fixedly contemplated the Vidame of Maulle, shook her head; then, lazily smiling, pressed a long kiss upon the young man's lips.

'You shall tell these things to Master Cappeluche when presently he breaks you upon the wheel on the Place de Grève! . . . You are a wicked incendiary, my love!'

And as the perfumes which issued from her eastern body bewildered and scorched the senses till the power to think had fled, she nestled up against him.

The tocsin continued; they distinguished afar the shouts of the crowd.

He replied, jesting:

'They would first have to prove the crime.'

And he returned the kiss.

'Prove it, naughty one?'

'Surely!'

'Could you prove the number of kisses I have given you? As well try to count the butterflies that flit on a summer's night!'

He contemplated this fiery mistress—and yet how pale!—who had just lavished upon him delights and raptures of most marvellous voluptuousness.

He took her hand.

'Besides, it will be very easy,' continued she. 'To whose interest was it to profit by a fire in order to carry off the daughter of Messire Escabala? Yours alone. Your word is pledged in the wager! . . . And as you would never be able to say where you were when the fire
broke

broke out! . . . You see, that is quite sufficient, at the Châtelet, to put you upon your trial. The inquiry comes first, and then . . . (she gently yawned) the torture does the rest.'

'I should not be able to say where I was?' asked Monsieur de Maulle.'

'Of course not; for, King Charles VI. then living, in that hour you lay in the arms of the Queen of France, child that you are!'

Death, in fact, arose stark and erect on either side of the charge.

'That is true,' said the Lord of Maulle, under the enchantment of the gentle gaze of his love.

He grew drunk with joy; he threw his arm about the young waist enfolded in her lukewarm hair, red as burnt gold.

'These are dreams,' said he. 'Oh, my sweet life! . . .'

They had made music that evening; his dulcimer lay flung upon a cushion; a cord snapped all alone.

'Sleep, sleep, my angel! You need sleep!' said Ysabeau, languidly drawing the young man's forehead upon her bosom.

The sound of the instrument had made him start; the enamoured are superstitious.

On the morrow the Vidame of Maulle was arrested and thrown into a dungeon of the Grand Châtelet. The trial commenced on the charge foretold. All happened exactly as predicted by the august enchantress, 'whose beauty was so great that it was destined to outlive her passions.'

It was impossible for the Vidame of Maulle to find what lawyers call an *alibi*.

After the preliminary investigation, ordinary and extraordinary, he was cross-examined and sentenced to be broken on the wheel.

The punishment of incendiaries, the black veil, and so forth . . . nothing was omitted.

Only, a strange incident took place at the Grand Châtelet.

The young man's counsel had become deeply attached to him; and his client had confessed everything to him.

Knowing the innocence of Monsieur de Maulle, his defender was guilty of an act of heroism.

On the eve of the execution, he came to the condemned man's dungeon and helped him to escape beneath the shelter of his gown. In short, he put himself in his place.

Was his the noblest of hearts? Or was he an ambitious man playing a terrible part? Who shall ever tell?

Broken

☞ THE FAIRY SHIP
by
Walter Crane

The sails they were of satin,
The mast it was of gold.



Broken and burnt by the torture, the Vidame of Maulle crossed the frontier and died in exile.

But the counsel was detained in his place.

The paramour of the Vidame of Maulle, when she learnt of the young man's escape, experienced only a feeling of exceeding vexation.

She refused to recognise the defender of her lover.

So that the name of Monsieur de Maulle might be erased from the list of the living, she ordered the execution of the sentence *even so*.

Whence came that the counsel was broken on the wheel upon the Place de Grève, in the place and instead of the Lord of Maulle.

Pray for their souls.

ON A BRETON CEMETERY

THEY sleep well here,
 These fisher-folk who passed their stormy days
 In fierce Atlantic ways ;
 And found not there
 Beneath the long, curled wave
 So quiet a grave.

And they sleep well,
 These peasant-folk who told their life away
 From day to market-day ;
 As one should tell
 Dimly, mechanically,
 Some poor, sad rosary.

And now night falls ;
 Me, passion-tossed and driven from pillar to post,
 A poor worn ghost,
 This sleepy pasture calls,
 And dear dead people with wan hands
 Beckon me to their lands.

ERNEST DOWSON

PONT-AVEN, FINISTÈRE, 1896

THE LILIES OF FRANCE

I



RIEND Léon,' said the Cardinal, 'I dreamed a dream last night. I found myself standing alone, out there upon the plain, and looking back at our cathedral: you know, how mountainous it looks, from out there upon the plain.' The Cardinal and his old friend, the Canon Laval, sitting tranquilly upon the high terrace of the archiepiscopal garden, gazed out in silence over the vast plain, which stretched away from the little city beneath them: away, so it seemed, into infinity and for ever.

'Yes! a strange dream!' resumed His Eminence. 'A kind of golden mist, or radiant cloud, drew down over the cathedral: and then, from the open great west gates, came a procession of three shining persons, who descended slowly into the city, and passed out through the poplar avenue, and across the bridge, on to the plain. As they came near, there was a vague sense of music about them, of incense clouds and palm branches: a vague sense, just that, for I neither heard, nor saw, any such things. And, as they came closer to me, I fell on my knees: Saint Geneviève, Saint Denys, Saint Clotilde! But when they came quite close, I saw that I was wrong. She, whom I took for Saint Clotilde, was in armour, and did not wear the crown of France: he, whom I took for Saint Denys, was in armour, and wore the crown of France. Ah, I knew well: Saint Louis and the Maid of Orleans, blessed warriors! The king stood between Saint Geneviève and the Maid: for though, as Saints reigning together in Heaven, the three were equals, yet here, come down to French earth, the holy Ladies observed their ancient reverence for the Royalty of France. Each of the three carried a lily in each hand: in the right hand, a lily of white; in the left, a lily of red: so they stood before me, as I knelt with clasped hands and outstretched arms. It seemed an eternity, that unmoving vision: when, at last, Saint Louis held out to me his lilies, saying, "The Lilies of France!" So did and said the Sacred Maidens: then the golden gloom covered all again for a while, till it slowly lifted, and I found myself still kneeling there, but alone; and I was holding, not three lilies of white, and three of red, but one lily, the colour . . . ah, the colour of Heaven, not white, not red, not partly both, but . . . ah, the colour of Heaven, that is enough! And presently

presently I awoke: the Lily of France seemed fragrant in the room, though invisible.'

'The interpretation?' said Canon Laval. 'We are old men, old men,' answered the Cardinal; 'you will understand, and not laugh at me. God forgive me the proud phrase, but I think that I shall give my blood for France and for His Church! Ah, my poor, great France! If I might dye my purple a deeper red for her! And in these times it is possible. The Church is growing, succeeding, triumphing; the people are coming back, yes! and the politicians. They know it, these infidels to God and to France, with their Freemasonry, their *Catéchisme du Libre-Penseur!* They see their bestial Utopia of free vice vanishing, just when they had caught a glimpse of it: *Qui habitat in coelis, irridebit eos!* And they know it; they know it, and love us but little, we who have been His instruments.' There was a flash of young fire in the Cardinal's eyes, a militant ring in his voice; but the Canon looked gently sad, and said nothing; he seemed to dream. 'You know it,' cried the Cardinal, 'you have seen it, how France is honeycombed with their societies, their brotherhoods: what brotherhood, my God! a brotherhood of swine! Even here, in our drowsy city, so quiet and contented and old-fashioned, they have their agents: a cathedral is a magnet to them, it attracts their especial malice, it is a "stronghold of superstition!" And a cathedral, where the throne is not an archbishop's only, but a cardinal's; and he, loved, I may say it, loved by his people, and upon good terms with the Government, with the officials! I have not been cursed and threatened in the streets for nothing. You heard that voice in the crowd on *Corpus Christi*, as I carried the Blessed Sacrament, "Down with your Christ and you!" It was one of our victories, that procession: forbidden for nine years, and now . . . the city would have stormed the prefecture, the town-hall, had it been prohibited. "Down with your Christ!" But He is going forth to battle: He is winning, and they hate Him the more. *Peccator videbit et irascetur; dentibus suis fremet et tabescet: desiderium peccatorum peribit!*'

But if the Cardinal, in his righteous impetuosity, seemed a second Eagle of Meaux, the Canon looked another Dove of Cambrai, calm resigned, of a mild pensiveness. 'You say nothing,' said the Cardinal. 'Your Eminence will forgive me: I was thinking . . . thinking. I cannot tell you why, but you recalled to me a long time ago, fifty years ago. I was in Paris, studying science: ah, the brave word, the fine word, science! And then, she died: and I could not work, I was in despair, I went wandering away by myself. And one evening, in
Brittany

Brittany by the sea, I came to a crucifix, old and black and weathered, upon the edge of the cliff. I threw myself down, with my arms round it, and prayed for death. . . . But you know, I have told you . . . 'Never too often, Léon,' said the Cardinal, touching his friend's hand: such thin and bloodless hands, both! 'And presently I felt a hand upon my shoulder: turning round, I saw an old, old, Breton woman, her good face wrinkled and bronzed with long years in the sea-winds. She spoke in her strange Breton French, something kind and gentle, all the courtesy of the poor in her sympathy. I could only say, "She is dead!" The woman stretched out her hand and touched the Feet, the wounded Feet, with an infinitely gracious reverence: "*Lui aussi: et Il vit toujours!*"'

'Yes,' said the Cardinal, after a silence, and with a sigh, 'the eternal lesson: so simple, we find it hard to learn, hard for our pride. And I thank you, Léon: you do not know why you spoke of this now, but I know. To labour for God's France, yes, that is but our duty; but to take pride in success, to be mortified by failure, to think of ourselves, no! Which is the proudest nation upon earth? Spain: and she has the humblest Saints, who endured the agony, and the darkness, and the dereliction. I . . . but yes, it is true, yes . . . I am full of myself. If I do anything for France, it is because I am a Frenchman; if for the Church, because I am a cardinal, bishop, priest; never anything for the pure love of God our Life.'

His lips quivered, and he ground his hands together in an iron clasp of the nervous fingers. Early twilight began to fall over the great melancholy plain, and the last flushes of the afterglow faded from the gray-green roofs beneath the terrace; there was no silvery gleam upon the poplars and the dim river. The peace of evening, the vesperal peace and pause, lay delicately over all.

'Come,' he said, 'it is growing late. And forgive me: that dream of mine, forget it, I pray you.' With a last gaze across the deep, the immense tranquillity of that darkling world, the old men rose, and passed through a low doorway into the sacristy of the palace chapel. A crucifix hung there; and the Cardinal kissed the Wounded Feet: '*Lui aussi, Léon: et Il vit toujours!*'

II

EVENING wore on, and the last *Angelus* rang out, solemn and sweet from the cathedral bell-tower. The familiar, daily sound fell unnoted upon many ears in the ancient little town: but it fell plainly and fully upon one pair of ears, always keen to take in ecclesiastical voices. 'I
tell

tell you,' said Jean Dubois, 'when I hear that accursed tinkling, I could spit at them all, from Monseigneur in the purple down to the youngest choir-boy.' He spat, and scowled up at the cathedral.

He and his companion were sitting outside a poor *café* in the river-side part of the town: Dubois with an *absinthe*, incessantly rolling and smoking cigarettes; the other with a *bock* and a rank cigar. Dubois was thin and waspish; he had very small, brilliant, black eyes, an olive complexion, an irritable intensity in the muscles of his face, in his rat-trap mouth. But a man, clearly, of a certain intellectual energy; that was plain in the alertness of his bearing, an impressive vivacity of presence and person. '*Quousque Domine?*' he chanted, with a mocking nasal twang and drawl. 'If I knew the Collect against Plague and Pestilence, I would sing that; these pests of the *soutane* are gaining ground every day; the country reeks of incense and wax candles. And this is France of the Revolution, scientific France, the Holy Land of Light! Voltaire, Diderot, Darwin, Haeckel, Renan, did they never live, then? *Tiens*, I shall sell my library and buy a *Paroissien* or the *Summa*. But we shall see, my friend, see in God's good time.' His companion, a man of less interesting make, laughed approvingly: 'And our friend, Dubois, our friend in this sleepy hole, His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop: is he still busy for the good God and the Pope?' Dubois drank off his *absinthe* and shook with passion. 'Ah, the red Cardinal, the boiled lobster of a Cardinal! His purple wants another dyeing. When he is curious about the colour of his blood, let him come to me! You can see for yourself: can you look into a bookshop, but you find Pastorals in piles? Can you open a newspaper, but you read a letter from the palace, with an infernal cross to its signature? Can you go down the street, but an absurd *cornette* flaps you in the face, or a big swinging rosary hits you on the legs? Is there a school, a hospital, that he has not tried to poison with his Christianity? And, so please you, ever a loyal citizen of the Republic, and who so obedient to the law!' His voice rose shrill and cracked, and the little table rocked upon its rickety iron legs, under the violence of his emphatic fist. Recovering himself with an effort, he proceeded quietly: 'The Church! No, it is not the Church, the clergy at large, that we hate. For myself, I do not meddle with your country *curé*, if he do not meddle with me. A good enough fellow sometimes; ignorant, harmless, no ambition in him. But your prelates, your very reverend professors, your Lenten preachers, your clerical deputies, your go-betweens with Rome, your dabblers in social questions, your cassocked economists, your Catholics of progress
and

and co-operation ! Ah, all went well when they held aloof and mumbled their masses to old women ; what did the churches matter, when the lecture rooms and the laboratories were all ours, the platform, and the press ? The faithful used to be *aborigines*, slowly and painlessly suffering extinction from the pressure of the civilised. But now, it is an insurrection of the barbarians, that we have to face. And this Cardinal is a *generalissimo* of barbarians, with the *Tricolor* in one hand, the *Fleur-de-lys* in the other ! “*Pax vobiscum !*” says he : my God, he shall find a sword.’

They left their seats, and strolled forth upon the rough paved way by the riverside. There was little noise or stir of any sort ; lights shone out from the windows of the low houses, and ripples of reflection quivered across the water. High above the steep slopes of housetops, whence more lights gleamed from attic rooms, rose the huge cathedral, a darkness and a vastness of stone, a mountainous petrification of lowering cloud. Dubois preferred another image : ‘The great black vulture,’ he muttered, ‘brooding over its prey.’ Presently he broke out into fragments of talk : ‘And this is France, our France ! Had it been any other country now . . . but France, is it possible ? Lourdes, Montmartre, mountebank superstition everywhere ! . . . and they die, our men of science, our critics, our statesmen and journalists, they die *fortified by all the rites of the Church . . . !*’ His friend ventured to interrupt him : ‘Yet we are not doing so badly, oh, not so badly ! If they are gaining strength, so are we.’ It was well intended, but infelicitous. ‘Bah ! it is natural for us to increase ; we teach that two and two make four, and that man makes God. They teach that two and two make five, because God made man ; and the number of believers in that nonsense is increasing. Spare me your consolations ! Tell me that orthodox Comtists, or any other scientific sect, which nicknames philosophy religion, are increasing, and I will thank you ; they are sane men with a weakness. But those *canaille* of the intellect ! Here comes one.’ A priest passed with an attendant : a sick call, evidently, and the Last Sacraments. ‘That . . . Patagonian mummary on the increase ! You will be asking for it yourself, one of these days.’ But they had reached their goal : a small house toward the outskirts of the town, with the look of a merchant’s office, or of some municipal business place. Dubois stopped upon the threshold, and sneered : ‘Are we increasing here ? Does the youth of this enlightened city flock to our classes ? Are the confessionals as empty as our benches ? And we have *truth* to teach, exact truth, verified truth, instead of Jewish fables. Well ! *magna*

est veritas; and there's no Latin so comforting as that, in their Breviaries.'

They entered, M. Jean Dubois and his colleague; students and professors of physics, an excellent thing; students and professors of atheism less . . . dignified and profitable a thing. Their labour of love, these private evening classes for the instruction of youth in scientific knowledge—not, indeed, in anarchist chemistry—was yielding but meagre blossom. Nevertheless, it was almost pathetic to note the ardour with which Dubois threw himself into the task of inspiring an enthusiasm, an emotional element, into his pupils' pursuit of sensible truth; he was sacerdotal, a fanatic tremulous with zeal, as he expounded to his score of youths the consolations of 'experimental *phenomena*,' and the delights of his favourite 'psycho-physiology.' When he cried, in that shrill voice, 'Mind is a demonstrable function of matter,' he might have been a fervent missionary, crying to his stricken penitents and converts, '*Ecce Agnus Dei!*' And as he discoursed, the thought of Christianity spreading its revised plagues over France, the thought of the Cardinal in his cathedral fortress, worked through his veins and pulses, a very fever and fire. 'Ah, the old days, when we thought all that done with, and used contempt where extirpation was required: fools that we were!' M. Dubois ground his teeth, and plunged vehemently into a dissertation upon the brain.

III

HIS EMINENCE pontificated at the High Mass of the Sunday following, and was announced to preach at Vespers and Benediction. He was outwardly a prelate of a frequent French type: courtly, with a touch of haughtiness in his elaborate manner, an air of treading the stage with state; tall and strong, happily gracious of gesture and intonation. Within, he was a man of very simple and fresh piety, with which his secular ability could not quite agree; statesman and saint had little wars with each other, and made truces or compromises, entirely legitimate, yet satisfying neither. The Holy See, the Republic, modern science and criticism and philosophy, social problems and theories: had he indeed taken a straight course, played a direct part, in these tangles and jungles of difficulty? Scruples tortured his sensitive conscience; and sometimes he fell to wondering whether it were the fault of his proper temperament, or a vice of these intricate latter times, that it was so hard for him to see black or white, such a necessity always to see gray. So far as might be, he put his perplexities and refinements from him, finding oblivious comfort in those labours, which are prayer. Of late,

late, he had been haunted by a presentiment of some conclusive fortune in store for him, by his own act or by another's, something definite and final in wait for him; and, as in his talk with the Canon, that old seminarist friend, the companion of his long career, he was troubled at the thought of a human pride mingled with his dependence upon the Will of God, whatever that might bring about for him. But Léon Laval, wise and winning soul, was always his refreshment; the old priest of so crystalline an innocence, so serene a faith, bathed his harassed spirit in spring water, and set all things in the sunlight of a pure simplicity. The Cardinal felt very peaceful upon this Sunday evening; his heart was light, and his faith joyous.

The austere cathedral church, little spoiled by changes from its first beautiful severity, was almost full when Jean Dubois entered it, with a passing repugnance upon his face, as he tasted the memories of immemorial incense on its cool and stilly air. The organ thundered, and sang, and sighed, sending a tremor along his nerves: emotional jugglery! he thought, and the mysteriousness of glooms, lights, colours, was nothing else. Vespers had already begun, and he followed them in a prayer-book, which he held with a kind of contemptuous hatred. Once only his features relaxed their despiteful impatience, as the choir chaunted, *Coelum coeli Domino: terram autem dedit filiis hominum*. 'Ah, that is a Lucretian god worth having,' he murmured, smiling. 'Let him keep to his heaven of heavens, and leave our earth to us.' The next verse pleased him yet more: *Non mortui laudabunt te, Domine: neque omnes qui descendunt in infernum*. 'True enough: a scientific fact!' But then came: *Sed nos qui vivimus, benedicimus Domino: ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum*. 'We shall see, we shall see, you and your *Dominus*!' He sat in his dark corner, fixing his bright eyes upon the great altar candles, and the enormous crucifix in the centre, presently shrouded in a fragrant mist, at the incense of the *Magnificat*; that odour of intolerable sanctity, to which he preferred the disinfectant and other savours of the dissecting-room, or the sharp smell of chemicals. At length the Cardinal, vested in that glorious apparel which makes a prince of Rome so commanding a figure, ascended into the spacious, grandiosely carven pulpit, and stood erect in silence, the very embodiment or representative of an hierarchy, which has upon it the strength and splendour of two thousand years. Dubois leaned forward, concentrating his strained gaze upon this superb tyrant, imperious in purple and fine linen, raised high above the heads of a subservient people, and prepared, doubtless, to proclaim dogmas that should long have been obsolete, and anathemas that
should

should long have been impotent. But His Eminence was disappointing. It was, yes, positively! it was the simplest of discourses, caressing and pleading; a praise of golden charity, of smiling patience, of valiant faith and hope; spoken in tones strangely softened and sweetened, as by some sense of solemn urgency and ultimate need. It renounced the old French oratorical unction of the pulpit, with long, modulated sentences and ornate periods, in favour of an exquisite simplicity. He spoke of essentials, fundamentals, life, death, love, sorrow; at first, almost as Marcus Aurelius might have spoken, with a plangent sternness, just telling the ancient tale of all humanity. The awfulness and majesty of the vast cathedral deepened, and a cold breath seemed to sweep through its glooms and shadows, as the strong, melancholy voice repeated the burden of the world; the sad wisdom, which is all that itself can reach; the wisdom of *So it is, and we must bear it*. 'Ah, gray world, dreary life, if that be all!' thought his unlearned listeners; but Dubois was nettled at finding his enemy able to appreciate with accuracy the facts of existence, and able even to rehearse them, sadly indeed, yet without flinching or palliation. It was a brief chagrin. After a pause, in which plaintive echoes of his grieving voice died away in the ample darkness, the Cardinal, as though teaching little children, and in tones tremulous for all their firmness, told the tale of Christ; there were no sickly-sweet embellishments, no skilful raptures and ravishments; it was the story of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Dubois heard a neighbour sob suddenly, and saw tears upon another's face; they were both men, working men; the very class, that he longed to win from the Galilean folly. Lost in his own exasperated thoughts, he no longer listened to the clear and clarion voice, that flowed and rang above him, until, as it fell into a slow and yet slower cadence, he felt again its fascination, and heard the words, joyous and triumphant: 'For He was dead once; and behold, He is alive for evermore!' Benediction followed: and as the hushed multitude bowed themselves to the earth before the Blessing of the Host, Dubois held himself defiantly erect, his angry eyes full upon the crystal of the monstrance and upon its Inhabitant. 'The Christ-myth, as this man told it, is enough folly, but that it should have developed into the worship of *That!*' It was within the octave of *Corpus Christi*, and a procession of the Blessed Sacrament formed itself. The long line passed down into the nave, chaunting the *Pange Lingua*; roses were strewn before the Rose of Sharon, and Eastern spices poured clouds of fragrant glory round Him. Dubois rose from his obscure place, and stood in the
gloom

§ THE BATHERS
by
William Strang



gloom of the huge porches ; through their open doors came the gleams and rumours of the city. For once, his faith in scientific progress, in mechanical democracy, in the Revolution principles, felt feeble and ill at ease ; an anarchist, now, with one gesture of ferocity and of revenge . . . where were your fine procession, then ? ‘ Martyrs, is that what the cause wants, for lack of which it flags ? Well, courage ! there are more ways than one.’ The procession passed by the great doors, where he stood hidden in a recess under the arches. Of a sudden, as if without willing it, he cried shrilly and fiercely to the Cardinal and to the Host in his hands, ‘ Down with the Christ and you ! ’ Turning, and thrusting his hasty way through the worshippers in the porches, he rushed down the steps, vanishing into the darkness and the safety of the narrow streets.

IV

NIGHT-PRAYERS were over, and most of the Cardinal’s household had retired. The Cardinal himself and Canon Laval talked long, as their manner was, upon events of the day, duties of the morrow, and upon things more intimate and reserved. The Cardinal’s private study was a large, gaunt, airy room, with three tall windows looking over the terrace, the garden, the city roofs and spires, and far away to the great desolate plain. Prelatical pomps were wholly wanting to this pleasant, but somewhat naked chamber of study and of business ; books were the best part of its furniture, with here and there a good engraving. The Cardinal’s writing-table, half covered with papers, had upon it beside an ivory crucifix, a breviary, a rosary, and a little silver bell. The room bore rather the aspect of a monastic superior’s than of a secular dignitary’s, in its freedom from any approach to luxury, and in its evident use for practical affairs. One window was open, and there streamed through the soft balm-wind of early night in summer.

‘ He is very good,’ said the Canon. He sat by the open window, and the cool wind played with the white hair upon his temples. ‘ God is very good. That was true devotion to-night.’ The Cardinal stood by his friend’s chair, looking up at a sky full of rich stars.

‘ Yes,’ he replied, ‘ yes. France is learning her lesson : rather, she is beginning to remember it, thanks be to the Saints, her teachers, and to our Lady of France ! But these poor men in our own city here, with their infidel *propaganda* : men like that poor wretch to-night, God pardon him ! How to reach *them*, dear Canon ! *Et alias oves habeo* ; it has been in my heart all day.’

The Canon mused : ‘ It will come right in the end ; either that, or a
new

new chaos, for society is not possible upon their principles. Pagan man was not happy, though he had not modern science to prove unhappiness his proper state; but man without belief and with that knowledge . . . it would be an universal misery, he could not live! Ah! the illogical arrogance of modern science, claiming that name for itself alone, and trampling upon philosophy, let alone theology! But have no fear: disguise it as they may, not one man in fifty, in twenty, can do without religion. For the few . . . their fanaticism *is* religion; they are high priests and missionaries, and they alone are dangerous.'

'*Et alias oves habeo,*' murmured the Cardinal; '*et alias.* Have we, have I, been too harsh, too denunciatory? Would personal influence be of any use? They hate us, I know it well; but may it not be in part because they think we hate them? And not without some reason: there's the sting. I know but the names of a few here, though I have met some of the leaders in Paris; were I to search them out, would they . . .' He broke off; there was a knocking at the door. A servant entered, and told His Eminence that a man, one Gustave Vanier, had asked to see him; the man knew, it was very late, but he begged the Cardinal for a few minutes' interview.

'I will see him,' said the Cardinal; then to the Canon, 'Charity, I imagine; they sometimes come to me, at all hours, when their own *curés* cannot, or will not, do more for them.' The servant entered, followed by Jean Dubois. 'You are not tired, Canon?' asked the Cardinal. 'No? then I will ring my bell for you, when I am free; I feel as if I had much to say to-night.' Canon Laval and the servant departed, and the Cardinal turned to Dubois. He was, as always, decently, if roughly dressed; in manner and face, he did not look like the common applicant for alms. But one could not tell. The Cardinal seated himself at the writing-table, motioned Dubois to a chair, and said, 'Is it upon a matter of charity, my son, that you wish to see me? If so, I will call for my almoner, the Canon Laval,' and he laid his hand upon the little bell.

'No, your Eminence,' said Dubois, in a voice that he tried hard to make respectful; 'I have not come upon charity.' He stopped abruptly; and the Cardinal, thinking him embarrassed, said encouragingly, 'Tell me, then, my son, what it is that I can do for you.' Dubois muttered under his breath, '*Your* son! faith, it would be news to my father.' After a slight hesitation and fumbling for words, he contrived to speak. Against his will, in spite of everything, the Cardinal somewhat awed him; unnerved him too, here, face to face with the purple tyrant in his
own

own room, and treated by him kindly. 'I am not one of your people,' he began. 'Not a Catholic, do you mean,' said the Cardinal, 'or not a Christian at all? Or, perhaps, I mistake you: you mean that you are not of my diocese?' Dubois kindled at the infamous word *Christian*. 'I am not a Christian at all, and it is about that I am here.' His prepared story began to flow: 'I am an artisan here, come from Paris with my wife and children. I have no religious belief, and I will not have my children brought up in any. The priests left us alone in Paris, but here they are in and out of the house every day, when I am away at work; taking the children on their knees, and giving them medals, and teaching them *Hail Maries*. My wife doesn't believe anything either, but she thinks it's pleasant for the children, and they'll forget it all in time. They've been baptized, taken to Sunday school and to church. I could forbid it if I chose; but I've come here first to ask, if your Eminence has any justice for a Freethinker.' He was growing excited and voluble; the Cardinal was not his superior after all; not even his intellectual equal. And his little fiction was surely to the point; here was a chance for the Cardinal to show tolerance and practise equity, to disprove himself a priestly pirate of souls. 'And what is it, my friend, that you would have me do?' the Cardinal asked quietly. 'Tell your priests to leave my children alone, and look after their own, if they have any!' 'I will hear you with patience,' said the Cardinal, 'but I cannot listen to ribaldry. Hear me now. I cannot, as an honest man and a priest of God, do what you wish. My priests have broken no law: when they do that, I will reprimand them, and you can obtain redress. Even now, you can exert your authority and forbid them your door; you can keep your children from Sunday school and church. Believe me, I am not reproaching you, I understand you perfectly; yes, in a sense, I can sympathise with you. But I have a duty to my Divine Master; if He is to be robbed of His little ones, it is you that must do it, for I will not! You have your rights, as I have said, your parental rights; we do not steal souls for God. . . . But will you not let me talk with you a little upon these questions of belief. . . .' 'I was educated by priests,' said Dubois with a jeering smile, 'and that is my answer.' The Cardinal sighed, murmured a prayer, and rose. Dubois rose also. 'You will not care for my blessing, my son; you will take my hand?' 'I will not!' cried Dubois; 'but you will take this!' With his own rapidity, say rather, rapacity of action, he snatched a knife from his pocket, and plunged it into the Cardinal's breast, beating down his proffered hand. Without more

than a long suspiration, the Cardinal fell back into his chair and lay there, after a brief quivering of his whole frame, peaceful and still in death.

Dubois bent over him ; '*Beati mortui!* Here is an end of His Eminence : Gustave Vanier is dead after an hour's life, regretted by all who knew him : and Jean Dubois . . . well, what of Jean Dubois ?' The little bell upon the table caught his glance. 'Ah, that will fetch the Canon, will it ? Yes, that is the best way.' He rang it ; the silver sound broke the silence delicately. The Canon entered, and saw Dubois standing by the table ; the Cardinal was . . . not sleeping, surely, overcome by the labours of the day . . . not . . . he came closer. Dubois flung up his knife into the air, caught it, pointed with it at the Cardinal, and said gently : 'You see, my Father ?'

V

THEY are living still, both Léon Laval and Jean Dubois. The Canon lives to say daily Mass for him, whom he calls 'my martyr' ; his thoughts and memories are all of him, and of one other. Now, when he murmurs to himself, looking out over the great plain, '*Lui aussi : et Il vit toujours,*' it is of two that he thinks. Dubois lives, in virtue of an impassioned advocate, an enlightened jury, and *circonstances exténuantes*.

LIONEL JOHNSON.

90 THE AUTUMN MUSE
by
Charles Ricketts



A NOTE ON ORIGINAL WOOD ENGRAVING



VIEWING the tendencies of wood engraving, it is well not to overlook those accidents of origin that have sometimes thrust the art out of its proper course, so that great technical efforts have dwindled in the value of their output. From the first, one of these evils was the detached draughtsman, from whom sprang an insistence upon the fashions in outline; the other element of failure at the root was the interpreter, with his callousness, his lack of responsibility, hence the great suggestive value of those few master-craftsmen who were designers and engravers at once. The early makers of block-prints were perhaps original engravers; with a rough sense of the material to hand, they made good use of solid masses of wood, uncut save for patterns in white of rude flower and leaf. But the ambition to emulate the drawn line was hard upon them; and early in the development of the art the magnificent illustrations to *The Canticles* show a conscious use of a flowing line, but so controlled by the use of the engraver's knife that the aspect remains cut, and cut excellently.

Notably in Italy, many woodcuts so called were perhaps executed on some kind of type metal, or pewter; that they were cast from the wood for convenience in printing is however most probable. In Florence an intelligent use of fretted black surfaces, even in the early years of the sixteenth century, should be contrasted with the more celebrated and earlier Venetian work, in which the wish to imitate a drawn line, more or less successfully, tends in intention to the sacrifice of the medium to purposes of the draughtsman. It may be doubted, for many reasons, if such work was due to original craftsmen; but relief engraving in Italy remained always a minor art, inferior to the contemporary burin work, anonymous, eclectic, a pirate among the inventions and achievements of others. The fruitful evidence of the original craftsman, his range from the strong to the exquisite, belongs to the northern arts, with which engraving had begun.

With the great German draughtsmen, who have made for us the inheritance of magnificent prints, all so various, the manner of drawing became somewhat modified, to meet the requirements of the engraver. But, unlike the delicate French cuts published and perhaps executed by Simon Vostre, unlike the still earlier blocks of the Netherlands, the draughtsman's



After
Original
Woodcuts
by
Albrecht
Altdorfer



draughtsman's flourish and cross-line play a dangerous rôle (the solid masses had vanished long since), and we can trace out the moment at which the pen-work became in part transformed by the processes of the knife-man. Under the influence of Durer the professional knife-work reached that pitch of manipulative excellence we all admire; with good reasons on the whole, it is imagined that he executed himself (though an advocate of engraving) not the mass of royal prints signed by him, but only the little *Agony in the Garden*, in which an inexperienced hand makes havoc of the intricacy and 'colour' of the work.

As if in repentance for the neglect of the mass drawn upon with a white incised line, the development of the Chiaroscuro method, first matured in Germany, brings about a set of masterpieces, both there and in Italy, in which interpreters' work rises to the level of an art indeed, and a transforming sense surpassed only by the colour prints of Japan in the eighteenth century. With these masterpieces, however the resources of the medium were not exhausted; in the work of a minor master, destined shortly to a front rank as an artist, as an engraver to the first and greatest place of all, namely Altdorfer, a new charm of daintiness and light will be added to the vigour in handling engraving had hitherto acquired. One may wonder that this delicate artist should have been overshadowed not only by the great Durer, but by a host of designers, such as Burgkmair and Aldergraver, to whom Altdorfer's graceful facility and sense of romance had been denied.

Nothing

50 After an
Original
Woodcut
by
Albrecht
Altdorfer



☞ After an
Original
Woodcut
by
Jan Livens



Nothing can surpass the handling of Lutzelburger in Holbein's *Dance of Death*, if his knife-work elsewhere is not of that exceptional quality. The bound and recoil of the reed-pen upon a hard surface, partly replaced with Altdorfer by delicate cut lines, tends here perhaps towards, greyness, but how precise and tender at once, how delicate, next to the cold unequal work of Tory!

In the twilight of the art, Jegher, the interpreter of Rubens, will evolve a new method, admirable and forcible enough; but once more

we

SC A WOODCUT IN FIVE BLOCKS
by
Lucien Pissarro





☞ An Original
Woodcut
by
Edward Calvert



☞ An Original
Woodcut
by
Edward Calvert



90 After an
Original
Woodcut
by
Reginald
Savage

we are indebted for 'intimate' methods to Livens, a man of slight reputation as a painter, remarkable only for his woodcuts. In his rare prints we find no evidence of a trade trace in workmanship, though done at a moment when professional expediency had prevailed. In the use of line freely conceived and the quest of its resources he has merited the hasty attribution of his few proofs in the past, and in perfect good faith, to the great Rembrandt, also an experimentalist upon wood, but occasionally, casually perhaps, without that subtlety and energy that a mention of his line-work would conjure up. With Livens the handling is full of poise and dignity, recalling in temper some of the fine portrait studies by Mr. A. Legros. In the art of wood engraving they stand alone.

Not to pause over the vignette designer and engraver Papillon, whose quaint bright work, still done with the knife, does not rise to past levels of art and design, we must overlook the origins of the graver and its use, to come to the two Bewicks, or rather to William Bewick and the new aspect of engraving in his hands. In landscape this artist's sense of mass in composition is not great, if in sentiment or aim he sometimes claims attention; minute, detailed, without, however, a very keen or vital sense of detail, his designs obtain by a merit of cheerful patience, and something local in feeling, parochial perhaps. His celebrated birds cannot be compared for life-likeness to the winged creatures drawn by the old Italian Pisanello. They seem imitated too carefully from stuffed specimens, never rising to the instantaneities of motion that we will find even in unimportant Japanese prints. His influence on trade methods in this country was very great, lingering on with Clennel and Harvey, and declining in merit till pre-Raphaelitism revived the use of line-work, interpreted, or rather copied, by the engraver. Among Bewick's followers, S. Williams had designing powers beyond the merely entertaining trace of a fashion in illustration. But, before the exhaustion of the Bewick fashion, wood engraving in the hands of William Blake once more touched past levels of attainment, and the stimulus of his little designs cut upon wood should count in the revival of a bolder spirit in the art, apart from their influence upon the exquisite prints by Calvert, made known to the public only some few years ago. Tender yet incisive, these specimens of original work may be compared to the most beautiful proofs of the past, to the lovely and romantic cuts of Altdorfer, to the noble portraits by Livens. With W. J. Linton, sometimes a designer, the author of a valuable but arbitrary book on the
masters



50 After an
Original
Woodcut
by
T. Sturge Moore

masters of wood engraving, himself an influence upon the practice, we find a survival of the old professional spirit at a time of artistic transition. To his advocacy of the white line, however, more than to his example, may be traced the efforts many years later to give new life in America to interpretative engraving; but the fate of all such work depends too much upon the matter to hand for its value to be appraised. The transformation of the design by the medium, as with Lutzelburger under the guidance of Holbein, or the German and Italian chiaroscurists, or a Jegher, is replaced by a competition with fine photogravure.

If the book illustrators of the sixties did not attempt to engrave their work, they had interpreters whose value is at last being felt, even abroad, where the revival of facsimile under Menzel's direction has seemed hitherto the last word in exquisite mimicry. In the waning of the pre-Raphaelite wave over illustration, Mr. William Morris and some friends made experiments to handle, with true engravers' style, a set of still unpublished designs by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. The three little musicians on the title-page of *The Earthly Paradise* is in earlier editions due to the cutting of Mr. Morris; the frontispiece by Rossetti to the *Goblin Market* may pass for a fortunate specimen of such work. How different in their curious blend of tentativeness with decision are these racy little prints to the trace elsewhere of steel engraving mannerisms it has been Mr. Linton's purpose to praise!

Before the year 1889, with the exception of J. F. Millet's experiments, too soon forgotten, the interest now so common in France to revive forgotten mediums lay very far indeed from most artists, both there and in England. With Mr. Lucien Pissarro we have the forerunner of modern French efforts in line and colour, and an influence upon the contemporary manner, very frankly admitted by M. Lepère himself, who may stand as the most accomplished of original French painter-engravers. Unlike the young Englishmen included in this note, Mr. Pissarro has done work in colour, both for Japanese water methods of printing and for the oil method. An engraver in the modern sense, he has also cut with the knife as a mediæval or Japanese artist cut in the past.

The output of Mr. T. Sturge Moore during the last seven years has been considerable. Not to praise work whose ultimate purposes are not fixed, I would point out that the style of original wood engraving is not here merely accidental, as of a trade engraver who is artist at his leisure, but in aim they show that directness of all work understood
within

within the peculiar conditions of a medium. They aim at effect brought about by white cutting into black, or by black lines showing the work of the tool in their shaping, and we have here no imitation of chalk or wash drawing, or of steel engraving, or of photography.

In France no artist of greater distinction than M. Jeanniot has made recent experiment in wood engraving. It is also good news to hear that one English school at least (that of Birmingham) has become conscious of the desirability of a revival. We may expect shortly to see these first attempts in the pages of contemporary magazines.

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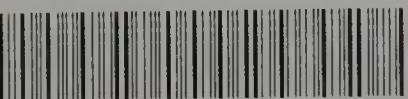
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